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JANUARY 15 1982

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Between intellect and imagination

By E. H. Gombrich

MARTIN KEMP:

Leonardo da Vinci
The Marvellous Works of Nature
and Man
384pp. Dent. £14.95.
0 460 04354 4

In recent years observers of the art-historical scene have sometimes sensed the danger of an increasing failure of nerve among the newcomers to the field. What had started as a healthy reaction against the amiable amateurishness of unqualified enthusiasts threatened to solidify into a rigid professionalism which excluded the tackling of any theme demanding a grasp of wider issues. Martin Kemp's excellent monograph on Leonardo da Vinci must dispel any such fears. His sensitive and original descriptions of the master's paintings and his evident familiarity with the traditions of medieval and Renaissance science justify his stated hope of combining the achievements of Kenneth Clark's classic on the artist with V. P. Zubov's unsurpassed account of the scientist in the context of his age.

What has made this enterprise possible is the advance which has been achieved during the past few decades in the dating of Leonardo's notes and drawings. Thanks, largely, to Lord Clark's catalogue of the drawings at Windsor Castle and the researches of Carlo Pedretti, evidence from paper, handwriting, even ink can now be used to establish the chronology of the notebooks. Hence the classic anthologies of his writings by J. P. Richter and E. MacCurdy, which present Leonardo's researches and reflections according to their subject matter, are seen to be somewhat misleading where they juxtapose early jottings with his mature thoughts on the same topic. Profiting from this new framework Professor Kemp has been able to offer the reader a narrative of the artist's life together with a fresh interpretation of his inner development, and in doing so, he has looked again at many of the problems of Leonardo's oeuvre and career.

Dividing his book into five chapters, Kemp calls the first "Leonardo the Florentine" to stress the master's intellectual roots in the city of Brunelleschi, the great architect,

sculptor, inventor of scientific perspective and engineer, and the environment of the Pollaiuoli, whose oeuvre testifies to a firm grasp of human anatomy. Kemp shows that the emphasis on sculpture in Verrocchio's workshop in all likelihood exerted a lasting influence on the pupil's ability to visualize forms in space, despite his later preference for the art of painting. He offers convincing reasons for dating the angel in Verrocchio's "Baptism" later than the Uffizi "Annunciation", where he brings out the contrast between the fine detail and the awkward construction. There are eloquent pages on Leonardo's unfinished "Adoration" of 1481 which stress the novelty of his methods of drawing and sketching: "The flow of his thought cascaded onwards in a rough and tumble of ideas, sometimes splashing off in unexpected directions - unexpected, we may suspect, even to Leonardo himself." Emphasis upon this fluency and flux in Leonardo's project enables the author to keep his own interpretations fluid also, hinting at possible connections and associations in the symbolism of the composition without presenting them as established facts. It is a method which stands him in good stead in the later chapters.

The complexity of the story Kemp has to tell compels him to divide the most fertile of Leonardo's periods, the eighteen years he spent in Milan, not so much chronologically as systematically. Having paid due tribute to the Louvre "Virgin of the Rocks" and its artistic and spiritual significance, he shows us the natural movement of Leonardo's mind from architecture to engineering (including plans for the construction of a "bird"), and on to investigations of the human body, its sense organs, the action of light and the laws of mechanics coupled with his interest in geometry stimulated by Luca Pacioli, with less stress on the astounding diversity of his interests than on their underlying unity.

Those authors who have written that Leonardo began by studying things as an artist but increasingly investigated things for their own sake have missed the point entirely. What should be said is that he increasingly investigated each thing

for each other's sake, for the sake of the whole and for the sake of the inner unity, which he perceived both intuitively and consciously.

It is for this reason that Kemp has called this chapter "The Microcosm", since in his interpretation the old doctrine of the correspondence between man as a little world and the universe as a macrocosm provided Leonardo with a unifying principle. Though the artist often expressed his contempt for mere book learning and claimed to rely on "experience" alone, we have long since learnt, in Kemp's words, that "observation requires a structured



The "Benois Madonna" of c. 1480, in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. context to acquire meaning, and exposition of its significance can only take place within a system of shared reference." It was this necessity which launched Leonardo on the uphill path of mastering traditional disciplines which were usually accessible only in Latin texts.

In an early anatomical drawing, one of the imaginary "ventricles" of the brain is reserved by Leonardo for both the intellect and the imagination, *fantasia*, a departure from tradition which has led Kemp to devote his next chapter to the "Exercise of *fantasia*". Here he introduces the reader to the admitted entertainer of the Sforza Court, devising

pageants and stage effects, improving music, telling fables and inventing emblems and allegories of astounding intricacy. Emphasizing the role of Vigevano (the Sforza's country retreat south-west of Milan), Kemp suggests that Leonardo may well have contributed to the amenities and the charm of the place. But today his activities as a court artist can best be grasped in considering the ruined murals of the Sala delle Asse in the Castello which are here analysed with much tact and imagination for their possible emblematic allusions and artistic import. The chapter includes a refreshing account of the "Last Supper" and its perspectival subtleties; a vivid appreciation of the "Lady with the Ermine"; and a discussion of the artistic and technical problems of the colossal monument to Francesco Sforza on which so much new light has been shed by one of the newly found Madrid notebooks.

Inevitably the next chapter, entitled "The Republic: New Battles and Old Problems", reflects the fragmentation of Leonardo's life after his departure from Milan in 1500, when he was tossed about by the political storms of the age as well as his own restlessness. He undertook and abandoned artistic and military enterprises for the Florentine Republic, accompanied Cesare Borgia on his campaigns, returned to Milan, left and returned again, while remaining elusive all the time to would-be patrons who wanted works from his brush. Not even Kemp can weave a wholly integrated narrative out of this tangled skein, but he compensates for this lack of unity through his thoughtful discussion of individual problems, the cartoons for the "St Anne", the "Battle of Anghiari", the geometrical studies, the dissections, and finally the "portrait of a Lady on a balcony" (as he prefers to call the "Mona Lisa"), suggesting convincingly that this most famous of all the master's works may have begun by him in Florence as a portrait of a particular sitter, but retained to be revised and reworked over the years till it crystallized into that image of mythical power, the counterpart in the painter's oeuvre of the lost "Leda" celebrating the mystery of beauty and the beauty of mystery.

In the author's interpretation this sense of mystery came to the fore in the last decade of Leonardo's life. He takes us from the problem of the London version of the "Virgin of the Rocks", which, as he says, has become more and more complex through the recent discovery of archival material, but in which he still wants to see evidence of the master's handiwork, to the Trivulzio monument and the late manuscripts and drawings dating from Leonardo's stays in Milan, Rome and France. Outwardly these are years of recapitulation and systematization comprising the ambitious project for an anatomical atlas, a study of the movement of water of which the Codex Leicester (now Codex Hammer) gives a good idea, and (partly) the *Trattato della Pittura*, with its sections on the behaviour of light. But psychologically, as the author shows, these were also times of resignation and retreat: the more the master extended his grasp of a subject the further did his goal of total comprehension recede.

That analogy between the macrocosm and the microcosm on which he had relied in his earlier years proved inadequate to account for the movement of the blood in the body and the water in the universe. "There is something heroic", writes the author, "in this rejection of a theory which he had cherished for so many years." "Ultimately", we learn also, "the beguiling goal of the late anatomies - the marriage of organic complexity and mathematical certainty in the context of mechanical law - proved to be elusive for the most part." At the same time the contradictory traditions on which he had drawn in his superhuman attempt to classify and explain the infinite shapes of waves and vortices refused to jell and forced him to admit defeat. But Kemp also shows that these intense efforts brought Leonardo into contact with the most advanced thinkers on this problem.

He stresses the link between Leonardo's reflections on compound motion and those of Nicolas d'Oresme, who discussed the example of an arrow shot into the air from a moving ship and landing again on the deck. The medieval author, we read, used the example to present the arguments for the possibility of a diurnal rotation of the

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earth, but Kemp does not mention that this connection may at last furnish an explanation of one of Leonardo's most enigmatic notes in a late anatomical manuscript, the laconic sentence "the sun does not move". The unlikelihood of Leonardo having anticipated Copernicus has made some scholars propose that he was not talking about the real sun at all, but about a pageant - a most unsatisfactory proposal, for why should the planet sun remain stationary in a pageant if it was thought to move in the Universe? But if the note refers to the diurnal rather than the annual motion of the earth, it might indicate that Leonardo took sides where the French bishop hesitated to commit himself - an important step indeed, but quite unrelated to the Copernican system.

If Leonardo had admitted this complication it would fit the picture of his late thought which Kemp presents in his account of the artist's studies of the eye and the nature of light. "It is a measure of his intellectual integrity", Kemp again comments, "that he allowed his optical studies to disturb the attractively tidy assumptions he had adopted as a painter-perspectivist." He was now attracted by "the infinite variables of the visible world, its illusions, ambiguities, deceptions and fleeting subtleties". His late studies of trees and of light playing on their foliage are a case in point, just as his famous "deluge" series is evidence of Leonardo's continued striving for a comprehension of those creative and destructive forces which pervade the universe. Perhaps his last painting, of St John the Baptist, captures something of the enigma which confronted Leonardo and which continues to confront us in his own personality.

It is not lack of gratitude and appreciation which makes one pause once in a while, and ask whether the author's very fluency, his method of *sfumato*, has not occasionally tempted him into veiling the outlines of this enigma. For the closer one tries to get to Leonardo, the more puzzling he becomes. One aspect of this puzzle is apparent to anyone who turns the pages of his notebooks in any facsimile edition.

Indeed it might be helpful to newcomers if Kemp, in a future edition of this book, prefaced his narrative with a brief account of these extraordinary documents. The same page will often exhibit an exasperating jumble of topics and trivia together with a dogged persistence in arriving at the formulation of a thought that had pursued Leonardo for years. Conversely we find sheets of drawings in which fleeting ideas for any number of images are started and abandoned, while a trivial doodle of Leonardo's favourite "nutcracker face" is meticulously finished and shaded. At times he would give free rein to his *fantasia* only to tighten the reins suddenly, as if to discipline

it beyond endurance. That he advised artists to let their imagination be stimulated by patchy walls is a familiar fact; it is less well known that for him the condition of talent in a boy was not his inventiveness but his capacity to "finish a drawing with shading".

No doubt it is the tension between these two tendencies which accounts for Leonardo's most notorious weakness, his apparent inability to complete any work in hand. It is a weakness already remarked upon by the Florentine humanist Ugolino Verino at a time when Leonardo was in his thirties. Paying a poetic tribute to the artists of his time (not quoted by Kemp), Verino wrote: "Perhaps Leonardo da Vinci surpasses all the others, but he does not know how to take his hand from the pen, and like Proteogenes spends many years in perfecting one." The criticism is modelled on a remark attributed to Apelles by Pliny, but its truth was and remained only too apparent. Maybe Verino was here alluding to the "Adoration of the Magi", for which the artist's ideas flowed so abundantly and which he left unfinished. The dreamlike plenitude of inventions he crowded into the underpainting makes us forget to ask whether even Leonardo could have turned these poetic suggestions into a finished painting without packing it too tightly. He was later to warn painters not to impede the flux of their inventions by premature finish. But his insistence on standards of completion, both in his writings and in his paintings, makes one doubt if he could ever have brought his composition of the "Battle of Anghiari"



The delicately impractical, almost Heath-Robinsonish air of many of Leonardo's early designs is evident in the Archimedean screw system in the top right-hand corner of the illustration, taken from the book under review. These "Devices for Raising Water and Other Studies", executed in pen, ink and wash c.1480, form a border to a page of the Codex Atlanticus, now in the Ambrosiana, Milan.

Images of vice

By Francis Haskell

DAVID CAST: The Calumny of Apelles. A Study in the Humanist Tradition. 243pp. Yale University Press. £20. 0 300 02575 0

In the second century AD Lucian wrote an essay on Calumny in which he described an allegorical figure, depicting that vice and supposedly painted by Apelles, the most famous of all Greek masters. In fact, Lucian's own account of the circumstances in which it was produced shows that the great Apelles could not have been involved for reasons of chronology. Lucian's essay became well known in fifteenth-century Italy and was translated from the Greek into Latin and Italian. Leon Battista Alberti adapted Lucian's description of the painting by Apelles in his treatise *Della Pittura* and suggested that as a subject it gave an artist special opportunities for displaying "invention" in a picture. Many painters, including some of the greatest, such as Botticelli, Mantegna and Raphael, did in fact produce paintings or drawings designed to re-create Apelles' lost Calumny.

and David Cast's book traces the development of this and related themes in European art (and, to a lesser extent, literature) until the nineteenth century - thus taking the story much further than has been done (in published work) by previous writers on the subject.

Close examination of the surviving compositions brings to light curious and significant differences between Lucian's account of the picture and the way it was sometimes interpreted by Renaissance artists. Thus it is on occasion possible to see which version of the story or which translation was available to certain painters, and also to note how the iconography varied in different places and at different times. Dr Cast makes use of the images he has assembled to throw a good deal of light on the changing relationships of artists to rivals, critics, patrons and public. He also gives us some useful insights into Renaissance attitudes to Envy, Calumny and other vices which aroused special concern, and the allows us to follow the development, spread and eventual decline of paintings devoted to such themes.

However, not all of the author's arguments and conclusions are wholly convincing. In the first place, his discussion of the re-creations made of Apelles' Calumny centres almost

entirely on its status as a moralising allegory. This sounds reasonable enough and is indeed often relevant, but unfortunately Dr Cast does not pay nearly sufficient attention to the fact (which he does of course know) that many, if not most, painters of the Renaissance and later took up the subject because they (or their patrons) wished to emulate a highly prized work of antiquity. Alberti's account of the picture was, of course, a far more accessible and influential source than Lucian's as far as painters were concerned, and Alberti shows no interest at all in its moral implications. Dr Cast's assumption that the painters who treated the subject must necessarily have been responding to concerns about envy and slander seems to me to be misleading. Thus I cannot see that an examination of hostile attitudes to court life and to Italian influences in sixteenth-century France is very relevant to an understanding of the versions of the subject produced by Primaticcio and Nicolo dell'Abate - both of them Italian artists working for the French court. Cast recognizes that this presents something of a problem but brushes it aside too easily with the comment that "no refiners explicitly, of course, Italian mores or to a discussion of the courtier's leading of that kind."

had to be brought to the image by the viewer himself" - who was, incidentally, likely to have been an Italianate courtier. Cast's discussion of the "Calumny" would have gained enormously had he set it in the context of the "Marriage of Alexander and Roxana" and the many other famous paintings of antiquity which were known to Renaissance and Baroque artists from literary sources. But these are not mentioned.

A similar sort of difficulty occurs with Cast's interesting discussion of the famous version of the "Calumny" painted by Federico Zuccari. He quotes at some length from the description of the painting later given by Zuccari's son Ottaviano; and rightly points out the interesting fact that differences are keen to emphasize the differences between his father's picture and that of Apelles. But although the embittered Zuccari almost certainly did have the Artist (indeed, himself) in mind as the man falsely accused by Envy and other evils, the fact remains that Ottaviano refers to the figure who is shown under the protection of Mercury merely as "the young man", thus giving the allegory the widest possible application. To say, as Dr Cast does, that "the figure" is clearly that of an artist is to take for granted what needs to be established,

especially in the context of Zuccari's other polemical compositions. These are matters of interpretation. Much more irritating are the factual errors and slips. To claim that in 1436 "doubtless Alberti knew of the Medici Venus", of which the first definite record is in 1638, seems unduly self-assured, especially as it is the type of the figure that is in question. The disputes mentioned on page 193 were not, as stated, "between the French Academy in Rome and the native school." The Scuola di San Luca - an absurd proposition - but between the Académie Royale and the Communauté des maîtres peintres et sculpteurs (or Académie de Saint-Luc) both of them in Paris. None of these mistakes is very important in itself, but when combined with an inadequate index and the very large number of misprints, they are apt to sap one's confidence. It sometimes seems as if the proofs have not been corrected at all. The same name or word may be spelt in different ways on the same page at both times wrongly at that. A Cardinal Francesco Borromini has been invented, and the mangling of names is liable to affect, with slap-happy indifference, a modern scholar, a twentieth-century painter or an art-historical journal. All this is regrettable in a scholarly book.

hands of the scientist. Would he otherwise have noted down with so much solemnity the exact hour and place where he believed he had found the solution of this problem? The solutions never worked, and so his expenditure of energy seems to us misguided, but was it really just thirst for knowledge that inspired Leonardo's superhuman efforts to penetrate the secrets of nature?

We must not forget that during the period of his intellectual formation in Florence leading philosophers pinned fresh hopes on "natural magic". Frances Yates has shown in her writings how the idea of the Magus was fed by the Hermetic corpus translated by Marsilio Ficino. The methods and means for fulfilling this aspiration must have struck the young artist as misguided, if not fraudulent. Indeed it is possible to detect in his satirical prophecies a parodistic element, mocking the portentous tone of these philosophers. What sounds mysterious can be seen to be quite natural in the light of cool reasoning. Is it not possible that Leonardo harboured the ambition to prove, through his labours, that the miracles claimed by these self-styled wonder-workers could indeed be achieved, but only through a rational penetration of the secret of nature's effects?

If this interpretation could be substantiated, it would suggest that the unity of intellect and *fantasia* in Leonardo was even greater than Kemp's Milanese chapters allow for. More often than not, however, *fantasia* was in the lead and demanded the impossible of the intellect. This is an aspect of Leonardo's personality which his contemporaries sensed very strongly, but which Kemp's biography leaves in the shade - his lack of realism, his "fantastic" leanings. It is a characteristic which is illuminated by a document mentioned by Zubov but not by Kemp, a letter (c. 1502) from Leonardo to Sultan Bajazet II, of which a Turkish translation was found in the archives in Istanbul. In it the master pledged himself to build a bridge with a single span, 1150 feet long, across the whole width of the Bosphorus. The further details of this utopian project matter less than the question of whether Leonardo himself believed in its possibility. But maybe we should not ask this question, for without this unrealistic faith in achieving the impossible Leonardo would not have been Leonardo. The Leonardo of Kemp's book is far removed from the wizard of popular belief who anticipated every invention or discovery later made by modern science and technology. He did not. But even though we must discard this anachronistic picture we should still acknowledge that he dreamt of performing miracles which only modern science finally achieved - and that by his chosen method of rational enquiry.

The ideology of rejection

By Robert Boyers

JAMES D. WILKINSON: The Intellectual Resistance in Europe. 358pp. Harvard University Press. £14. 0 674 45775 7

As a study of anti-fascist intellectuals in France, Germany and Italy during the years of the Second World War and the immediate aftermath, James Wilkinson's book does more than illuminate a period. It documents, better than any work with which I am familiar the various ways in which ideas change under the pressure of events. It shows, as well, how subject to disillusion and despair intellectuals are, most of whom achieve dispassion only when they abandon specializations, or are content to describe rather than to analyse or shape events. If anything distinguished the anti-fascist intellectuals in the period Wilkinson studies, it was their unflinching commitment to ideas and to the prospect of renovation in a culture on the brink of extinction. But precisely in the degree that they were serious about ideas and about renovation they were also subject to the varieties of retreat to which most intellectuals are inexorably compelled. If, as Wilkinson contends, the period of the Resistance was a period of hope, the larger picture reveals how rapidly hope gave way to resignation.

A major element in this study is the relation between public and private virtue. In the Resistance itself, intellectuals came to feel that they had a working model for a society of the future. There was an acceptable discipline, imposed by participants in a way that reflected their immediate needs and interests. All could agree that there was an enemy whose defeat was the primary objective, and all could feel that the ideological differences dividing them were insignificant beside the primary goal. Life in the Resistance had, in this sense, an elementary simplicity that participant intellectuals valued more than many could have anticipated. One could feel ambivalent about all sorts of things, about one's children or marriage or future, without having also to consider the possibility that life itself was insignificant. Sartre recognized during his eight months of captivity in a German prison camp that "private life, if you wish, no longer existed". One belonged to something greater than oneself and more important than anything one was likely to accomplish by oneself. Private virtue was, in this sense, indistinguishable from public duty. One maintained a feeling of solidarity with one's comrades. The philosopher who had previously refused an "abstract notion of duty" - particularly duty conceived as a collective obligation - because this was incompatible with his idea of freedom, suddenly found himself fully engaged in a national and communitarian struggle to which he owed perfect allegiance.

In fact, as events were soon to show, the question of the relation between public and private virtue was not settled by the Resistance experience. It had merely been put aside. Intellectuals who, in 1940, had a clear sense of their priorities, were by 1946 uncertain about the very possibility of a political commitment. Camus was not alone among French writers in discovering that the ethical precepts of the Resistance were not applicable in the post-war years. When he resigned from the staff of the Resistance journal *Combat* in 1945, he already knew he would have to dirty his hands if he were to remain as intimately involved in politics as he had been. Even the question of whether or not to punish war criminals proved difficult. In the end, as Wilkinson notes, "Camus threw his weight on the side of the avengers for fear that the guilty might otherwise go free." But like Sartre and others in French Resistance circles, Camus had been forced to take positions at all on such questions, and the ambiguous behaviour of several war criminals who in adverse

situations seemed every bit as honourable and sincere as their accusers took a heavy toll on Camus. His principled defence of "proportion" and refusal to go along with Mauriac and others who wanted an end to hostilities of any kind could not guarantee that he would feel any more secure in the future than he did in the present. Merleau-Ponty and others on the left felt that ambiguity, properly appreciated, encouraged an appetite for risk, but Camus was far more typical in learning to value caution.

Merleau-Ponty, of course, was a central figure in French intellectual life, and seemed to understand better than his colleagues how complicated any political issue is likely to be. Unlike Sartre, he resisted from the first an idea of absolute freedom, arguing in his *Phenomenology of Perception* that "free action", in order to be discernible, has to stand out from a background of life from which it is entirely, or almost entirely, absent. We may wish to resolve problems by insisting upon what we know to be good, but always we are forced to acknowledge constraints. Every affirmation of freedom is also in some sense a restriction of another's freedom. The rationalist who poses every dilemma as an either/or situation loses sight of the way in which freedom and contingency are invariably connected. The free human being, as Merleau-Ponty describes him, has to "establish his autonomy on the very ground of his dependence".

In *Humanism and Terror*, 1947, Merleau-Ponty presented what he took to be the political consequences of his view. A defence of the Moscow Trials, the book refutes in effect the theory of them offered by Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon*. It is in every respect a sorry performance, the arguments muddled, the distinction between progressive and regressive violence entirely unsatisfactory. Wilkinson briefly explains what is weak in Merleau-Ponty's position, properly concludes that "a less rigorous standard" is applied to Marxism than to "its liberal counterpart", and asks, "Why should Marxism benefit from suspended judgment when liberalism was condemned solely on the basis of present facts?" Part of the burden of *Humanism and Terror* is to argue that concepts like freedom and justice can be fully understood only by those with a revolutionary perspective. What matters is whether or not an action delivers the desired "objective results". Does it delay or further the revolution? Other questions are likely to betray collective hope, and Koestler's respect for "man in the singular" was but one expression of a "mediocre Marxism" that would soon assume the aspect of a sterile and reactionary ideology.

Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Koestler was part of his larger critique of bourgeois violence. The critique was based upon his conviction that what was not openly admitted could not be effectually reformed. If it was the goal of bourgeois society to conceal violence by "appeals to Order" or to the economic laws of free enterprise, then it was the duty of progressive intellectuals to tear away the camouflage and prevent that species of violence from becoming institutionalized. Marxist societies might commit this act of violence or that, but were aiming in the long run at something better. They did not pretend that freedom in the abstract was a noble virtue, or that freedom was possible in a society that depended upon the so-called free activity of the market. Freedom, properly understood, was a virtue only if responsibly used, and it could be responsibly used only by persons who had genuine reason for "the unity essential to the revolution". Those who judged the Moscow Trials by the standard of an abstract virtue unrelated to the ongoing struggle were naturally unable to see what was in fact at stake.

Merleau-Ponty's defence of state terror in the interests of the revolutionary future was only one of many

efforts to transcend ordinariness, and like most of the other efforts, it was itself transcended or abandoned as circumstances changed and the future turned out to seem as shabby as the past had been. Wilkinson's book helps us to feel how tempting it was for gifted people even during the Nazi period to conclude from the first stirrings of distress that nothing could be done, and that political action especially would bring one to a bad end. Even in France, after all, the Resistance was the effort of very few people. And those few, once the Liberation had occurred, quickly became "more concerned with the abuse of power [by emergent politicians] than its exercise".

In Germany, of course, the retreat from real political resistance occurred more or less at once, and those who wanted to resist Hitler were mostly forced to get out of the country. Wilkinson examines the content of poetry produced by Germans in POW camps, and concludes that, like most French Resistance writers, the Germans related everything that "invited ambiguity and harbored lies". They wanted to believe that the truth was simple, and felt that they might purify their souls through suffering. By enduring, they would prove they had the courage to remake the German spirit, to reform its character. Hitler would be defeated, sooner or later, and in some ways it would be better for ordinary Germans not to have other Germans to blame for his defeat. "Stab in the back" legends had an ugly way of turning people from their own responsibilities, and if anything was necessary, it was that ordinary people in Germany should be made to confront the awfulness of what they had done.

It is always difficult, of course, to understand how German intellectuals can have fallen silent, or nearly so, during the Nazi period. But Wilkinson is quite right to stress how few people in the population at large were or would have been ready to support a resistance effort. It is not only that people feared what might happen to them and their families. The fact is that most Germans were at least ambivalent supporters of the Reich, and would not have thrown their support to persons of questionable loyalty particularly if they happened to be partisans of the left. What Wilkinson calls "the continuing German respect for qualities extolled and exploited by the Nazis - obedience, loyalty, bravery, hard work" made even the post-war responses of most Germans a good deal less morally strenuous than might have been supposed.

So Germany was not a country in which a fully formed intellectual resistance movement may be said to have taken shape. To speak, as Wilkinson and others have done, of inner emigration, of silent resistance, is to acknowledge that political action is not always a viable option, and that to resist only the worst excesses demanded by a given regime is somehow to keep oneself ready for better things when conditions improve. This is hardly a stirring "program", but it does address what may be the available perceptions of reality under conditions of absolute terror. It is hard to be impressed by the poetry of German émigrés who submitted mournfully to Hitler as if he were a force of nature, but it is also hard to know what would have been a more effective protest against that force. To die bravely, in a cause known from the start to be only a protest, is to have kept the only other option, in which one uses the literary reflection and commemoration would have to have been left to a later generation.

Wilkinson's book also discusses the Italian Resistance, a subject of great deal, less a subject for most Anglo-American readers than the Resistance. In France or Germany, it has been clear for some time that many Italian writers supported Mussolini for a while at least, but we have heard relatively little of their Resistance efforts. Important Italian writers like Pavese and Vittorini have had only a modest number of their



Avenue des Acacias, in the Bois de Boulogne, July 1941: the traditional and the experimental take to the roads in the Paris of the Occupation. This wartime scene forms one of the illustrations to Paris Allemand by Henri Michel (380pp. Paris: Albin Michel, 2 226 0276 1), which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

works translated into English, and these are in general not widely read or discussed. Vittorini's major anti-fascist novel, *Uomini e no*, has never been translated into English, so far as I know, and the scrupulous attention paid this book by Wilkinson will rightly make us feel how much we have been missing. Silone has, of course, been widely praised and studied, in England and America, though anyone who takes him for a representative Italian Resistance figure will be badly mistaken. The sweetness and probity of Silone's mind were not qualities widely shared among his colleagues, and the inter-ethnic warfare they waged among themselves during and after the war does not provide an entirely edifying spectacle.

Vittorini emerges from Wilkinson's pages as the leading, or at least the most interesting, Italian Resistance intellectual. After briefly supporting Mussolini's attempt to clean up what both took to be the bourgeois mess, he joined with others to fight against the régime. The struggle was for the most part fought with the usual literary and journalistic tools, but it was a special struggle in the writer's persisting desire to enlist the aid of ordinary people. Vittorini's review, *Il Politecnico*, was not directed exclusively at an élite readership but tried to address social and political problems in a language accessible to all. Wilkinson rightly indicates how important Gramsci was to Italian leftists, and invokes "Gramsci's faith that every person had an intellectual vocation". But he also shows how hard it was to hold on to this faith. Not only were readers often unable to follow debate. That was a problem that might have been remedied in the long run. More troubling was the opposition of other leftist intellectuals to the very idea of debate. Vittorini's journal "nurtured debate by presenting opposing points of view within the same issue". This policy itself came under heavy attack by the Communist publication *Rinascita* and whatever unity Italian intellectuals may have achieved in their common opposition to Mussolini was quickly eroded. The hostilities followed a course comparable at least to the sectarian quarrels that split the American left in the 1930s and led to the creation of the journal *Partisan Review* in New York.

The pattern is really quite simple. A Vittorini, with the best will in the world, launches a journal dedicated both to resist fascism and to conduct a careful inquiry into present conditions. He finds, gradually, that a good part of his constituency is unhappy with him. Why? Because the inquiry he supports has no definite "end in view", as Wilkinson puts it. He does not know what exactly he wants to find, has no clear sense of

what the presumably revolutionary future will look like, what shape it ought to take. More, those who are unhappy with his policies come also to attack the very idea of art and culture as these are promoted in the journal. The cultivation of aesthetic insight is derided as counter-revolutionary, a capitulation to bourgeois affectation. After a while, Vittorini finds himself arguing that "culture must preserve itself from the 'backwardness of the masses'". What had seemed a viable democratic exercise turns out to be a holding action against the combined forces of blind political adventurism and philistinism. Brecht's facetious suggestion that intellectuals "dissolve the people and elect another" comes to seem an idea whose time has come. And, increasingly, intellectuals with some sense of a political vocation withdraw from politics to sing sad songs and concern themselves with issues more obviously tractable.

None of the key Resistance figures accurately predicted what would occur years later in the various countries affected. Who could have foreseen how Pavese's warm feeling for the United States would turn to contempt once he and other Italians had made contact with the occupying American armies? What indications were there that Konrad Adenauer's 1957 election motto, "No experiments", would help to consolidate the gains of a rebuilt German society fully capable of producing first-rate writers, artists, and thinkers? And who, finally, could have foreseen the failure of leftist intellectuals in the Western countries to build genuinely popular movements on the left? At the beginning of his book, Wilkinson recalls the sectarian debates of Julien Benda and Karl Mannheim in the 1920s and '30s, and supports Mannheim's view of intellectuals as persons capable of maintaining "creative dissatisfaction", no matter what the temporary success of their programmes. At a time when most Western intellectuals have tired of programmes, and are more disaffected with the state of the economy than with the spiritual impoverishment of their respective nations, there remains a sense that things have not changed so much as we may wish to believe. If, as Wilkinson contends, young Resistance intellectuals forty years ago "defined their beliefs largely by what they rejected", current Western intellectuals may be said to operate quite in the same way. The only genuine "progress" we can claim is in the collective resistance to extravagantly idealist solutions. The other temptation to which many intellectuals succumbed forty years ago, namely irrationalist prophesies, remains very much a present danger. If the resistance spirit we associate with Camus, Silone, and Vittorini is good for anything, it will serve to strengthen our current resistance to that most potent temptation.

To see the person whole

By Don Locke

MARY MIDGLEY:
Heart and Mind
The Varieties of Moral Experience
176pp. Brighton: Harvester. £16.95.
0 7108 0048 7

PETER SINGER:
The Expanding Circle
Ethics and Sociobiology
190pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £6.95.
0 19 524646 3

One essay in Mary Midgley's new collection is called "On Trying Out One's New Sword", a title which might well have served for the whole - except, I imagine, that she would not herself describe the sword as new. Right from her opening, introductory, chapter she flails valiantly to left and to right, striking here with the side, cutting there with the edge, and sometimes impaling neatly on the point. It is a book of superb spirit and style, more entertaining than a work of philosophy has any right to be. To take two minor examples, there is C. E. Moore's pedantic prose style "like an old lawn-mower chugging over rough ground", or those reductivists who think "we ought to take to dissecting our brains instead of using them".

But all this cut and thrust, the cry and the clamour, tends sometimes to obscure the argument. A key chapter on the very notion of morality is so poorly structured that the reader has to think it all through for himself - no bad thing, perhaps - and there is an unfortunate tendency, in someone quick to criticize others for overstating their case, to exaggeration. "Every term in these contentions needs defining," she writes, "and any reasonable definition will wreck the conclusions." Every term? Any definition? Too often the author rejects some claim as meaningless, or as failing to make sense, when what she really means is that it seems to her obviously false.

Under the spell

By Desmond Lee

RUSH RHEES (Editor)
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Personal Recollections
235pp. Oxford: Blackwell 1982.
0 631 19600 3

We must be grateful to Rush Rhees for this collection of memories of Wittgenstein. The number of people who knew him personally is now few, and it is valuable to get such first-hand testimony on the record while it is still possible. This collection has a particular interest because none of the contributors was professionally concerned with philosophy; in their conversations with Wittgenstein philosophical topics were not discussed, and were indeed deliberately avoided. The man is seen without any philosophic misnomer to cloud the vision.

The volume ranges from recollections by his sister Hermine, who was

But then I doubt whether Mary Midgley intends her book to be read as a work of philosophy, at least in the narrow technical sense. This is not the usual introduction to moral philosophy, but an invitation to think about the issues. Indeed it is our contemporary tendency to divide things up, to compartmentalize, to specialize - with the by-product that academic books become very boring - which she sees as the main obstacle to a proper moral understanding. At this point the metaphor of the sword becomes wholly inappropriate, for what the specialists of different persuasions - the behaviourists, the sociobiologists, the linguistic philosophers - have set asunder, Mary Midgley is concerned to put back together, to see the person whole. To this extent the book's subtitle is inappropriate too: it is concerned not so much with the varieties of moral experience, as with its interconnectedness. It is no use trying to unscrew the outside from the inside of the teaspoon.

It is easy to see from Mary Midgley's book where things have gone wrong. It is much less easy to see where to go from here. It often seems that if only we could get something straight we could build towards a proper understanding of human morality, and perhaps the burgeoning human and social sciences can at last provide us with that starting point. The trouble is, though, that the contemporary orthodoxy is that matters of value, as distinct from matters of fact, are precisely what we cannot get straight, for here everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and no one can prove to the satisfaction of all that he is right and others are wrong. And this disease then infects even facts about values. The claim that values are relative to societies or individuals, for example, quickly becomes a matter of interpretation and opinion, about which individuals can legitimately differ, depending on their own value-scheme.

Nevertheless, here and in her earlier *Beast and Man*, Mary Midgley clearly belongs among those who be-

lieve that there are facts, facts of human nature, which have to be the starting-point for any adequate account of human morality. In this her interests overlap, once again, with the most prominent contemporary attempt to put ethics on a sound scientific basis, the project of sociobiology, whose claims for morality are also the topic of Peter Singer's latest book. Singer begins with a clear and crisp account of the biological basis of ethics, and especially altruism, a topic which metaphorical talk of selfish genes has done more to obscure than clarify. As Singer shows, relying mainly on the work of others, human evolution can be expected to produce creatures who are moderately altruistic, and altruistic in motivation as well as deed. Indeed what else should we expect from evolution, since that is clearly what we are?

But as Singer is well aware, to move directly from biological claims about the origins of attitudes and conduct to substantive ethical claims about the content of morality is to commit a well-known fallacy, which has not, however, prevented sociobiologists from sometimes doing precisely that. The content of ethics, according to Singer, is grounded not in biology but in reason, and in particular in a principle of equal consideration of interests. Yet this principle, whose application has been steadily extended through the course of human history - the expanding conflict of Singer's title - comes into conflict with the biological bases of altruism, which instead incline us to favour first our own families, then those with whom we come into regular contact, then those of our own society or race.

This conflict, which ought to be familiar to anyone who prefers buying presents for his children to relieving the suffering of children overseas, is dramatized philosophically in William Godwin's "famous fire case", where we are faced with a choice between saving some noted benefactor and saving our own mother who, as Godwin says, may be "a fool or a prostitute, malicious,

lying or dishonest". Of what consequence is it that she is my mother? What magic is there in the pronoun "my" to overturn the requirements of morality? But if reason and justice demand that we save the benefactor, perhaps, as Godwin came belatedly to recognize, human beings are not made like that.

It might seem that in any such conflict, biology would have to win. But, Singer argues, reason is not the slave of our genes, any more than it is the slave of our passions. As Midgley also emphasizes, evolution presents us not with a rigid determinism but with a choice between or a need to harmonize, different and often conflicting natural preferences. People are, by their biological nature, thinking and deciding beings, and they can decide to act in ways which are contrary to the evolutionary scheme. They can, for example, use contraceptives. Yet even the use of contraceptives itself demonstrates the power of our genetic inheritance. Presented with a choice between contraception and chastity, most of us will prefer the former, precisely because evolution has made us sexy. And if evolution, likewise, has made our altruism limited, where does that leave the impartial consideration of everyone's interests?

Singer's own solution to this problem is obscure. He seems to agree both with Godwin and with his critics - in principle we ought to save the benefactor; in practice I will save my mother - and suggests that a conventional rule-based ethics may prove more practicable than the abstract appeal to the interests of all. His argument peters out with the hope that reason, combined with an increased understanding of the evolutionary pressures, may still win through.

Much depends, therefore, on Singer's argument for the rationality of his principle of the equal consideration of interests, and that, unfortunately, is the weakest part of the book. The argument is of two kinds, positive and negative. The negative argument seems to assume that the

only alternative to his principle is some form of absolutism which takes no account of the consequences of morality. The positive argument seems to assume that only an impartial or disinterested justification will satisfy a requirement of being acceptable to everyone. But assumptions seem clearly false.

To non-philosophers, moreover, Singer's argument will seem a prime instance of the philosophers' fallacy of assuming - despite a delightful caustic quotation from Oscar Wilde - that we are more rational than we actually are. No doubt wholly moral beings will agree on something only if it can be shown to be equally in the interests of all, but human beings, down the centuries, have been persuaded to accept all manner of arrangements which are decidedly neither impartial nor disinterested.

Like the sociobiologists, who despite their name are manifestly more interested in biology than they are in society, Singer tends to underestimate social needs and pressures. Societies need to survive, no less than the human species, if only because the human species needs societies to survive in, and those factors which contribute to the survival of the society - co-operation, conformity, obedience - may not be the ones which evolution has bred into the individual. It is therefore possible, as the psychologist Donald Campbell has suggested, that societies evolve moralities as a counterweight to our genetic individualism, and that the greater the genetic pull towards individualism the more demanding the social morality has to be. This failure to consider Campbell's position is the most striking omission in Singer's impressive synthesis.

Singer's virtues are in many ways the opposite of Midgley's. Where she is provoking, he is thoughtful; his literary style consists solely of the exceptional clarity of his prose. But both are books which deserve to be as they are obviously intended to be read, and remembered well beyond the narrow ranks of the professional philosophers.

Cambridge I do not think anyone else worried about it either. It is true that Wittgenstein admired Weininger; but as Rhees again says, he would not have accepted Weininger's interpretation of Jewishness, any more than he accepted his view of women ("How wrong he was," quotes Drury). It was probably the Nazi persecutions that made him think about it, and there is no mention of it in Drury's two contributions.

These form the major part of the book, the first having already been published elsewhere. Though the meetings were interrupted by war and other causes, Drury knew Wittgenstein well and these are tributes to a friend "kind, generous, quick-tempered, and with his own eccentricities". They are full of interest, if inevitably disjointed, and record some characteristic sayings. "Do not allow yourself to become too familiar with holy things". They bring out the quality of character of the summary just quoted - the kindness and generosity and the quickness of temper which was never bad tempered. And they show Wittgenstein's strong if elusive moral preoccupation, and the despair to which he was often given. He never succeeded in doing what he described in his own words to Russell - "mit mir selbst ins Reine kommen" - an elusive phrase which I would venture to translate, "in coming to terms with myself".

The editing of the volume is a little uneven. If Hermine's German was to be included it is a pity that a translation is not given of footnote 5 on page 25, which gives the correct version of the interview with Russell and Moore. It seems unnecessary to include a page of particulars about someone as well known as Leavis, who has already been dealt with adequately in a footnote; the diagrams are omitted from John King's contribution; the footnotes are of unequal relevance and the postscript rather laboured.

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Who's afraid of Tom Wolfe?

By Pearl K. Bell

JOHN HELLMANN:
Fables of Fact
The New Journalism as New Fiction
164pp. University of Illinois Press.
£7.80
522 00847 2

It is now almost a decade since Tom Wolfe, then the Grand Cham of the so-called new journalism, gleefully predicted that his kind of reportage would soon "wipe out the novel as literature's main event". What he called "the damnable novel", which had lured generations of would-be serious writers in the wrong direction, was as good as dead and buried. Novelists such as Saul Bellow had been displaced in the literary firmament by Wolfe, Jimmy Breslin, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer, et al, though they still refused to acknowledge that this had happened. The pioneers of the new journalism placed themselves at centre-stage in their accounts of everything from hot-racing to the latest New York fashions in manners, clothes, and morals. Since novelists, in Wolfe's view, had become increasingly visionary, occupied with myth and fantasy, social realism had been left to the journalists, who now conceived their work and methods in radically new ways. These bright and self-assured new voices, according to Wolfe, would no longer be hobbled by outmoded conventions of objectivity and impersonal detachment, by the gentility of understatement; not for them the dull drone of a self-effacing prose devoid of "personality, energy, drive, bravura... style, in a word". Up with flamboyant realism, down with the obscurity of the novelists' who had run the novel into the ground.

Tom Wolfe's complaint about the modern novel was hardly new. Some twenty years before, Lionel Trilling had remarked, in an essay on David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, that the contemporary novelist was no longer preoccupied with actuality, that he had lost "the sensitivity to things and the curiosity about them" which were "essential to the very idea of the novel", and this indispensable curiosity had now been preempted by the sociologists. Some-what later, Mary McCarthy made the same point in her famous essay "The Fact in Fiction", in which she argued that "the distinctive mark of the novel is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable". Unlike Wolfe, however, Trilling and McCarthy sought not to replace serious novelists, but to recall them to their task.

John Hellmann, in this study of the new journalism, had a different beast in view, and seeks to prove that the reportage of Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, Tom Wolfe, and Michael Herr, far from dethroning the myth-mongering novelists, belongs alongside them in the imaginative pantheon of "fabulist fiction". This is a startling idea - or would be, if Hellmann had made a genuine effort to prove his thesis against Wolfe's contradictory claims for the superiority of reportorial realism over the surreal fictions of Vonnegut, Barth, Pynchon, Coover, and the like. Hellmann asserts, but does not demonstrate, that such books as Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, about the Vietnam war, or Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, about the Presidential race, are part of the high literary art of our time because they combine the credibility of reporting "with the self-reflexive pattern-making of fabulist fiction".

Hellmann relies on words like "pattern" and "fabulist", as well as on other overworked favourites in the lofty-academic-vagueness repository (metaphysical, authorial, consciousness, ontological, unreality, reality, etc), but does not define them with the precision such generalities demand. The words seem to have a mystically self-confirming power for Hellmann, but his pretentious terminology is often ludicrously inappropriate to his subject. To endow Thompson's scatological hysteria and messy self-indulgence with "ontological status" presumably involves the critic from any further effort at making proper critical judgments.

Hellmann is indifferent to such matters, but even if he were less of a complaisant academic critic, his attempt to make "fabulist" bricks from new-journalist straw would be doomed by the nature of his subject. Despite Tom Wolfe's pronouncements, the new journalism has proved no more capable of destroying the novel than of sustaining the fantastically bright style devised to grip the easily distracted readers of *Esquire*, the *Herald-Tribune's* Sunday magazine, the *Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*. Even in its heyday during the 1960s, when the *Herald-Tribune* hoped to stave off its demise with Tom Wolfe's try-anything-does-it, the new journalism was new only by virtue of its excess, and it was certainly not journalism in any useful sense of the word. The free-swinging antics of Wolfe and his co-pendents in very large part on the reporter's pose of recounting "real life" as though he were making it up (as indeed he was some of the time). While this could be amusing, the fashionable taste for zany trivia proved to be short-lived, and the term "new journalism" came to be casually affixed to any reportage that freely used the pronoun "I". Its

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Hellmann is unable or unwilling to acknowledge that the "consciousness" which presumably converts new journalism into art is in the main conscious only of the journalist himself. This short-sightedness stems largely from Hellmann's uncritical ascent to the clichés of the 1960s about American society and culture which pervaded the self-centred journalism of Mailer and Thompson a decade ago. (Tom Wolfe's instinctive distaste for every form of solemnity led him to mock the pieties of guilt-stricken white liberals as caustically as he skewered the pretensions of café society, and in the process he brought the indispensable term "radical chic" into the language. Unfortunately his malicious frivolity was not always so salutary.) In Hellmann's ported sociology of culture, lifted without the faintest scepticism from Mailer and Thompson, contemporary America is destructive, "unreal", and corrupt simply because these journalists say that it is all these things - and worse.

It seems not to have occurred to Hellmann that Hunter Thompson's drug-addled revelations about Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern were often more hallucination than fact, or that Tom Wolfe's anti-intellectualism seriously distorted his exposés of art, culture, and the New Yorker. Because he has left no critical distance between his judgments and the new journalists' assumptions about society and themselves, Hellmann ignores crucial questions raised by the books he seeks to analyse, in particular Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* and Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. Why, for instance, did Mailer leave himself out of the book to such an uncharacteristic extent? One would never guess from Hellmann's discussion that the circumstances that led Mailer to write a "true-life novel" about Gary Gilmore did him no more credit than they did the rest of the media predators who exploited the story for all it was worth. That Mailer's virtual absence from the story, along with his reliance on materials gathered by other reporters, would seem to disqualify *The Executioner's Song* as new journalism is never considered, even though Hellmann specifies personal involvement as vital to the genre.

Neither does he take into account, in his discussion of *Dispatches*, the way Herr's frenetic prose, soaked in the drug and rock argot of the counter-culture, attempts to project all this as yet another aspect of the Vietnam war. And he fails to notice, though it is surely as significant as all the prattle about "authorial consciousness", that Michael Herr, for all his brilliant insights into the way the war had affected American life, could not recognize the hypocrisy of "revolutionary" rock stars like Mick Jagger, braying "Street Fighting Man" while the dollars poured in.

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The tackier textures of success

By Carol Rumens

JOHN UPDIKE:
Rabbit is Rich
467pp. André Deutsch. £7.95.
0 233 97424 5

When Harry Angstrom is first introduced to us, aged twenty-six, in *Rabbit, Run*, his achievement is already a thing of the past, and he is at the point where his stinging limited present has become unendurable. The high-school basketball champion who was breaking county records back in the early 1950s now works as a demonstrator of the MagiPeel Kitchen Feeler. He has a three-year-old son, Nelson, and a disorganized and very pregnant wife, Janice, who has recently discovered a taste for whisky. All that Harry has left of his earlier days is his basketball nickname, Rabbit. He can still run, however, and early in the novel attempts flight from Mount Judge, the suburb of Brewer where he has lived all his life, to the Gulf of Mexico. Through a childish panic he finds himself taking the wrong direction and driving back towards Pennsylvania; it is then that he runs for reassurance to his old coach Tothoro. Tothoro obliges him, and Janice, who has been glowingly vague reminiscences; he also leads Rabbit to Ruth, and a brief love affair which leaves her pregnant, thanks to Rabbit's fastidious aversion to female contraceptive devices.

Ten years later, in *Rabbit Redux*, the tables are turned: Janice deserts Rabbit for the suave Greek, Charlie Stavros, an employee of Springer Motors, her father's company. Permissiveness invades the shaky Angstrom household as Rabbit gives shelter to two radicals, Skeeter and Jill. In both novels, the wages of sexual liberty are death. In *Rabbit, Run* the deserted Janice, in an alcoholic daze, drowns their new baby daughter while trying to bath her; while *Rabbit Redux* has Jill burned alive in a fire started by vengeful neighbours.

In John Updike's new novel *Rabbit is Rich*, Rabbit, another decade on, is almost a star again. His father-in-law has bequeathed him co-ownership, with Janice and her ever-present mother, of Springer Motors. America is running out of gas, but Rabbit is confident that nothing on the road can beat his Toyota for mileage. With his yellowing press-cuttings and basketball trophies ranged around the walls of his office, he feels the textures of success as intensely as he once felt the grittier quality of failure.

swinging in his clean suit in and out of Service and Parts where the men work filmed with oil and look up white-eyed from the bulb-like engines as in a kind of underworld of the star and spearpoint of all these two dozen employees and hundred thousand square feet of working space which seem a wide shadow behind him as he stands there up front.

Reverberations of the horrors in Rabbit's past are well-dulled by this lining of dollar-rich fat. If the lives of Rabbit and Janice have been transformed it is not by their shared experiences of tragedy, but by money. This may be seen as evidence of the kind of psychic limitations a consumer society imposes, allowing its members the opportunity only for material growth, but it is not an inference Updike makes himself.

Rabbit, then, is only fleetingly haunted by a sense of guilt. As he views the headless rich harvest of the dead (now including Tothoro and Skeeter), he feels "happy" simply to be alive, even the contemplation of the old shortcuts shows him that the earth is mortal; for enhances his own sense of wealth. He is aware of, but untroubled by, the fact that menally he dodges among more blanks than there used to be; patches of burnt out grey cells where there used to be brains and keen reasoning and which he would now one of his employees is thoroughly amenable.

Thinking of that ten-year-old penetration of Janice he feels "hostile and cozy in almost equal proportions," with coyness getting the edge. Unfortunately, it is difficult to make exciting fiction out of the compromises - or the deceptions - of maturity. Lust, keen dreaming and wide-eyed dream were the very qualities which made the two earlier novels as engaging as this one, over all, is not.

In both the previous books Updike views his anti-hero with the minimum of irony. Though alive to the clash between what actually happens and the ideal to shed an impassioned light on the actual, whether the latter takes the form of a woman's body or a geographical place. His technique is similar in the new volume, though now the idealism burns less brightly. The title perhaps suggests a gentle mockery, since Rabbit is no Rockefeller; he is rich only by his own small-town standards. But, just as the author is not out to draw morals, so he refuses to exploit the great satirical potential of Rabbit's menopause, and continues to view the world through his protagonist's essentially innocent and humourless eyes. The humour that emerges does so casually, simply as part of Updike's *verité* technique.

Rabbit/Updike possesses in abundance the poet's "negative capability". The whole-hearted response to scenes and people pours out in pages of fluent description, in which rhapsodic breathlessness is usually tempered by clarity of observation. Few other writers have a more thrilling sense of the tacky, cluttered beauty of urban surfaces. In *Rabbit, Run* Brewer is "a red city, where they



John Updike, Georgetown, Massachusetts, 1974; from *The Writer's Image*, a book of "literary portraits" by Jill Krentz (David Godine. £17.50. 0 87923 349 4).

Fantastist in the shopping-mall

By T. O. Treadwell

JIM HARRISON:
Warlock
262pp. Collins. £6.95.
000226251

Warlock is a comic novel which rests on the premise that beneath the slick and sophisticated surface of American life the old nature gods still exercise their capricious power. This fauna-in-the-shopping-mall territory has been explored before, by writers as various as John Cheever, Peter De Vries and John Irving, but the landscape is a rich one, and to it Jim Harrison has brought a fresh and original eye.

Johnny Lundgren, the novel's central character, is forty-two and lives in rural Northern Michigan with Dixie, his glamorous second wife. He has worked as an executive for a family foundation but the revenue authorities have come to view these institutions as elaborate tax-avoidance schemes, and Lundgren has been unemployed for a year, living on his wife's earnings as a nurse. Lundgren leads an elaborate fantasy life centred on his private identity as "Warlock", a secret name

paint wood, tin, even red brick red, an orange rose flowerpot red that is unlike the colour of any other city in the world. . . . In the new book, something of the excited manner remains, but the view is both more sharply realistic and cruder in feeling: Brewer, now is

the flowerpot-coloured city that German workers built on a grid laid out by an English surveyor and where now the Polacks and spics and blacks sit crammed in listening to each other's television sets through the walls, and each other's babies cry, and each other's Saturday nights turn ugly.

There is nothing in the new novel to compare with the extraordinarily vivid and tender love scene between Ruth and Rabbit in the first book, where the minutiae of the domestic and emotional ritual are recorded precisely, excitedly, but without salaciousness. Here, all but one of Rabbit's sexual encounters are with his wife, though he is still very much alive to the attractions of other women. At the start he is ambivalent in the Carter administration's interest, that had been pretty faithful, began to wobble, and by now there is a real crisis of confidence. But now Rabbit is rich enough to solve his financial and sexual problems at a stroke. Troubled by the thought of devaluation, he purchases thirty Krugers, and in what amounts to a slightly coarse-grained parody of an Updikean love scene, comic but desolating, he and Janice make love. "Gods bedded among stars", he turned on by the profligate scattering of their newly acquired gold coins over the bed.

As a more emotive spur to action, Rabbit is certainly an unsuitable case for an odyssey. He lacks the complicated mental equipment of a Heinegg or even a Zuckerman; he is little philosopher or politician and so on. In the earlier volumes his dream seem to matter. His talent was perhaps simply for being young. At twenty-six he announced "If you have the guts to be yourself, other people'll pay your price." That optimism had at least a quality of true desperation, giving the narrative propulsion and tightness this novel lacks. When we leave him, Rabbit is nursing his first grandchild, a little moist-eyed. If not yet quite pious, he is obviously determined to go gentle into that good night. Rabbit doesn't run any more; he goes jogging.



given him in boyhood during a cub-scout initiation ceremony. As the novel opens, he is emerging from a powerful and mysterious dream at the climax of which a voice from the earth has commanded him to change his future. He finds the idea a compelling one, but in spite of the magical and diabolical associations of his secret name, Lundgren-Warlock does not find it easy to take charge of his own destiny.

It is his wife, more intelligent and energetic than himself, who at length finds him a job, with the sinister Dr Rabun, a millionaire inventor whose masterpiece is "an absurdly effective prosthetic device for men made impotent by severe diabetes and other biological rather than imaginary causes", and whose weird balloon-like shoes may well hide cloven feet. Lundgren is to act as a sort of private detective, defending the far-flung outposts of Dr Rabun's financial empire from the depredations of swindlers and bloodsuckers, chief among whom are the doctor's hostile wife and homosexual son.

As a job for a fantastist this could hardly be bettered, and Lundgren sets out on the trail - the lone wanderer, master of his fate and captain of his soul. For a time, he is successful (though his successes depend more on chance encounters and

Updike faces Rabbit at the beginning of the novel with the casual appearance in his show-room of a girl who resembles Ruth. Rabbit is both sexually excited by her and convinced that she is his daughter. His attempt to discover her real identity and to track down Ruth herself is somewhat intermittent and lacklustre, however, and ends in a polite stalemate as he accepts Ruth's insistence that the child cannot be his. Then there is the confrontation between Rabbit and Nelson, an aggressive ritual which, despite the Angstroms' fear that their son has been traumatized by events in his early life, centres on entirely traditional areas of contention - a pregnant girl-friend, the desire to "drop out" of college, and ill-treatment of the father's car.

If we are intended to draw a parallel between Nelson's behaviour and that of Rabbit in his youth, it is not a particularly illuminating one. Viewed through Rabbit's world-weary gaze, Nelson's wriggings in the closing part of adulthood seem banal: the young Rabbit was Werther-like by comparison. With his political cynicism and whining sense of having been cheated by his elders, he seems a typical rather than unique product of his generation. "It's dullsville", he complains, in surely dated hipster slang, of his Alma Mater, Kent State. "People think because of that shooting ten years ago it's some great radical place, but the fact is most of the kids are Ohio locals whose idea of a terrific time is drinking beer till they throw up and having shaving-cream fights in the dorm. Most are going into their father's business anyway, they don't care." The irony of this is that Nelson himself urgently wants a job at Springer Motors. Rabbit only reluctantly

operates as well.

We are given to understand that *The School of Eloquence* is a work in progress. It would be interesting to know if its author has a final shape in mind. My own suspicion is that the sequence is potentially endless and that it will continue to grow, rather like Berryman's *Dream Songs*, in an *ad hoc* and catch-all fashion. Nonetheless, *Continuous* is divided into three sections that give it the semblance of form: the first dealing with language, culture and history; the second with Harrison's relationship to his working-class parents, both now dead; and the third with more casually related themes.

There are, however, many pieces that would fit as happily into one section as into another, which I take to be a measure of the intrinsic unity of this book. In lieu of an ultimate design, a sense of inner necessity prevails - a spirit of opportunism and legerdemain, whereby trifles and lucky finds are shown by the poet to carry greater significance than we, his continuing readers, could ever have predicted.

Harrison is a latter-day Metaphysical, but one who explicitly renounces metaphysics of the religious sort. An outstandingly powerful poem called "Marked with D," concerning the cremation of the poet's father, who in life worked as a baker's man (shades of the nursery rhyme), leaves this quite clear:

When the chilled dough of his flesh went
in an oven
not unlike those he fuelled all his life;
I thought of his catracts ablaze with
Heaven
and radiant with the sight of his dead
wife,
light streaming from his mouth to shape
"dot. Florence and not Flo but always
"Florence".
I thought how his cold tongue burst into
game
but only literally, which makes me
sorry for his sake there's no Heaven to
reach.
I get it all from earth my daily bread
but he hungered for release from mortal
speech
that kept him down, the tongue that
weighed like lead.
The baker's man that no-one will see
and England made to feel like some dull
in smoke, enough to sting one person's
eyes
and ash (not unlike flour) for one small
leaf.

travels over the landscape in a doomed attempt to impose a set of crazy but noble ideals on recalcitrant everyday reality. Lundgren's dreams are less than chivalric, but they are generous and humane. There is nothing evil about Lundgren, and the novel ends with Lundgren's acquiescence in his own bewilderment.

Warlock carries an epigraph from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lines in which Bottom speaks of having had "a most rare vision . . . a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was." Like Bottom's, Lundgren's dream is misleading and only partially understood; misleading because the boundaries between dream and reality are blurred. Both Bottom and Lundgren become actors in a fatal tragedy of love which, by their own incompetence, they reduce to farce; both are fools with access to an instinctive wisdom denied to the wiser folk around them.

Of the younger characters, Pru, the pregnant girl-friend, is the most interesting. Updike has not lost his ability to capture a woman's physical uniqueness, in the process settling two ("high-school loveliness"). He gives us the lover's-eye view of flawed mortality, investing plainness with eroticism. Pru rouses Rabbit, lust with her smile that has a "corner in one corner" and "her long downy arms and skinny bangles wrists", but since she is about to give birth to his first grandchild, a sense of propriety holds him back. His last hope of an adventure is offered by Cindy MacKart, a conventionally fuscious member of his "set" at the Flying Eagle Tee and Racquet Club. But the time has never been consistently kind to Rabbit, and though they no longer plunge him into disaster, they are determined to steer him narrowly away from the fulfilment of this precious if banal desire.

Rabbit is Rich says under a weight of description, as if catching the exact textures of everyday life as well as Rabbit's thoughts and feelings could make up for the absence of real conflict. Its conversations often read like insufficiently edited tape, as if a tape-recorder had been surreptitiously set at the poolside of the family dining table. It could almost be the kind of book a "literary" writer would produce if forced by penury to "novelize" a few episodes from some neatly-observed television family saga. Updike, by being true to the extreme ordinariness of his character and the conservatism of his society, has turned himself into a bland reflection of both.

Rabbit is certainly an unsuitable case for an odyssey. He lacks the complicated mental equipment of a Heinegg or even a Zuckerman; he is little philosopher or politician and so on. In the earlier volumes his dream seem to matter. His talent was perhaps simply for being young. At twenty-six he announced "If you have the guts to be yourself, other people'll pay your price." That optimism had at least a quality of true desperation, giving the narrative propulsion and tightness this novel lacks. When we leave him, Rabbit is nursing his first grandchild, a little moist-eyed. If not yet quite pious, he is obviously determined to go gentle into that good night. Rabbit doesn't run any more; he goes jogging.

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In wishing to change his future, Lundgren aspires to change the world. We are told that "on a mostly subconscious level he was vitally concerned with the world conforming to his idea of it." This ambition allies him to another, potent literary archetype, the Knight of La Mancha (Lundgren characteristically prefers his story in the Broadway musical form his wife finds disgusting) who

TONY HARRISON:
Continuous
50 Sonnets from *The School of Eloquence*
64pp. Rex Collings. £3.95.
0 86036 159 4
U.S. Martial
Bloodaxe Books. £1.
0 906427 29 0
A Kumquat for John Keats
Bloodaxe Books. 75p.
0 906427 31 2

Continuous continues, and contains, a sequence of poems by Tony Harrison that first appeared in book form some three years ago, when Rex Collings brought out a volume under the title from *"The School of Eloquence"* and other poems. There were eighteen *School of Eloquence* pieces in that book. Nearly twice as many have been added to make up the fifty that constitute this one.

These poems, which their author, following Meredith's example, has decided to call "sonnets", are of sixteen rhyming pentameter lines each. There is, however, a certain amount of give and take where metre is concerned. Many lines are rhythmically uneven. Some stop abruptly at the fourth line, while others have extra syllables thrust upon them. Harrison's sense of opportunity and exactness of ear aid him in these arrangements, but I should also say that a strong leaning towards prosodic misbehaviour - a tactical wish to make things rougher for the reader than they need really be - operates as well.

We are given to understand that *The School of Eloquence* is a work in progress. It would be interesting to know if its author has a final shape in mind. My own suspicion is that the sequence is potentially endless and that it will continue to grow, rather like Berryman's *Dream Songs*, in an *ad hoc* and catch-all fashion. Nonetheless, *Continuous* is divided into three sections that give it the semblance of form: the first dealing with language, culture and history; the second with Harrison's relationship to his working-class parents, both now dead; and the third with more casually related themes.

There are, however, many pieces that would fit as happily into one section as into another, which I take to be a measure of the intrinsic unity of this book. In lieu of an ultimate design, a sense of inner necessity prevails - a spirit of opportunism and legerdemain, whereby trifles and lucky finds are shown by the poet to carry greater significance than we, his continuing readers, could ever have predicted.

Harrison is a latter-day Metaphysical, but one who explicitly renounces metaphysics of the religious sort. An outstandingly powerful poem called "Marked with D," concerning the cremation of the poet's father, who in life worked as a baker's man (shades of the nursery rhyme), leaves this quite clear:

When the chilled dough of his flesh went
in an oven
not unlike those he fuelled all his life;
I thought of his catracts ablaze with
Heaven
and radiant with the sight of his dead
wife,
light streaming from his mouth to shape
"dot. Florence and not Flo but always
"Florence".
I thought how his cold tongue burst into
game
but only literally, which makes me
sorry for his sake there's no Heaven to
reach.
I get it all from earth my daily bread
but he hungered for release from mortal
speech
that kept him down, the tongue that
weighed like lead.
The baker's man that no-one will see
and England made to feel like some dull
in smoke, enough to sting one person's
eyes
and ash (not unlike flour) for one small
leaf.

the metaphorical substance of this poem lies not in any expression of religious belief, but in the metaphor of a poem as an impossible thing to be imagined. Yet even here we can detect a supplementary caution - a note that is meant to warn us against accepting the poem as a transcendent achievement. Punning on both words and images with a fervour and brilliance that are typical of his best work, Harrison still aims to subvert his conceit by means of bathetic devices: the drab use, twice, of "not unlike"; the comic rhyming of "Florence" and "sorry"; and, above all, the devastating irony whereby the truth of the poem is to be found in that prosaic and killjoy phrase, "but only literally".

Harrison is frequently both touching and funny when he writes about his own role as a poet. "I'd like to be the poet my father reads!" he declares wistfully in part II of "The Rhubarbarians". The poem "Bringing Up" concerns his mother's horror at her son's first published volume, *The Lovers*, and concludes with her judgment: "You weren't brought up to write such mucky books!" Another piece, "Book Ends II", dwells on his failure to write an appropriate epitaph for his mother, and reports his father's scathing response: "You're supposed to be the bright boy at school / and you can't tell them what the fuck to put!" Clearly, with domestic testimonials like these, it would be hard for any poet to maintain huge confidence in the primacy of his art.

Articulating the awkwardness

By Christopher Reid

and stout upholders of our law and order one day thought its depth worth wading on and borrowed a convict hush-hush from his warder grey, mad, dumb. Not even a good flogging made him holler!

The phrase "hush-hush" has a particular eloquence in this context, and is typical of Harrison's urbane guerrilla tactics, whereby a witty device, disguised as something throwaway, almost negligible, is left to explode at the least expected moment.

Harrison is a cunning operator. He knows, not only all the tricks in the book, but how to invest their use with a potent ironic force as well. Thus, in describing Uncle Joe's stammer - the simile itself is thrilling - as "like a d-d-damascener's hammer", he endows a mere speech-defect with all the grace of that sought-after poetic figure, alliteration. Or, else, in

Yet Harrison continues to write, and it would be worthwhile to ask his reasons for doing so. On the evidence presented here, I should say that his poems constituted manoeuvres in a kind of class warfare, in which deliberate awkwardness plays a crucial part. Harrison's technique is to work in dangerous enemy territory, behind the bourgeois lines, taking pot-shots in that most cultivated, and hence vulnerable, of middle-class preserves - poetry.

"Articulation is the tongue-tied fighting", we read in "On Not Being Milton", the first poem in *Continuous* and the one that comes closest to offering a declaration of intent. A number of these sonnets have been written to redeem those for whom repression has taken an oral or verbal form: Harrison's Uncle Joe, a stammerer, and Uncle Harry, who was dumb; the speakers of non-standard languages and dialects; the Luddites, whose words are doomed to be "silence, parties and hush on whistling hills"; and, most movingly, the nameless victim of the fate that is described with such anger in "National Trust":

Bottomless pits. There's one at
Castleton,

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Here the wrong word, the malapropism, becomes the rhyme-word, and therefore the right one. It is as if this were Harrison's method of vindicating his father before a reading public that must perforce consist largely of class enemies.

Doing things as well as, if not better than, the bourgeois practitioners gives Harrison the licence to do them more clumsily too. There are some lines in *Continuous* that remain obstinately hard to enunciate, and others where the syntax twists like a maze intended to lose readers, rather than help them on their way to understanding. Metaphors are frequently mixed - sometimes to comic advantage, as when Harrison laments the loss of "the tongue that I once used to know / but can't bow up on now, and that's mi mam's" - but occasionally with disastrous results. The poem "Fire Eater" opens with a persuasive simile -

My father speaking was like conjurers I'd seen
pulling bright silk hankies, scarves, a
flag
up out of their innards, red, blue,
so many colours it would make me
sick -

but the attempt to unite this with a metaphor involving fire-eating is hopelessly garbled: "I'm the clown sent in to clear the ring. / Their [his father's and uncle's] are the tongues of fire I'm forced to swallow. / Then bring back knotted, one continuous string, / igniting pent-up silences

Harrison's stance is ambivalent, to say the least. He can, and often does, write like a virtuoso, and yet awkwardness abounds on almost every page. A well-sustained metaphor may be followed, as in the case above, by a botched one, as if the poet were telling us, with didactic emphasis, "You can't hope for treats all the time."

The clue to Harrison's ornery attitude is to be found in a poem entitled "Turns", which describes the death of his father:

Dad was sprawled beside the postbox
(still VR)
his cap turned inside up, beside his
snuggled in A H in purple Indian ink
and Brylcreem slicks displayed so folk
might think
he wanted charity for dropping dead.
So far, so effective - but the poem concludes:

He never begged. For now! Death's
reluctance
crowns his life's, and me, I'm opening my
toosk the class that broke him for the
pence.
that splash like brackish tears into our
cap.

Harrison is fond of recalling George Formby, but these last lines bring to mind a comic who works in a field closer to sentimentality and embarrassment - Norman Wisdom. Is their

tenor not a little too mawkish? I think so, but I dare say, too, that the effect is intentional. A poet who refuses to heed bourgeois precepts where metrical regularity, the use of impolite words and rhetorical assaults on his readership are concerned would, after all, be unlikely to give much thought to the question of "good taste" - except in so far as it offered yet another weak spot through which to offend cultured sensibility. The heart on Harrison's sleeve is worn - no bones about it - to disconcert.

The best poems in *Continuous* are those that demand our immediate heartfelt response, and they are to be found mostly in the second section, where intimate family matters are at issue. Whereas one sees the good sense of those pieces which deplore the suppression of people who could not speak for themselves, one feels the rightness of the one that begins: "Though my mother was already two years dead / Dad kept her slippers warming by the gas", or of the two or three that mourn the dissolution of a beloved household after the deaths of both parents.

Harrison's mode of awkwardness is perfectly suited to describing the unease within a family where he was set apart by his bookishness and superior education. The rare moments of communion across the more poignant, whether the poet is describing a session in an air-raid shelter whose trappings ("Air Raid Precautions out of Ken's / A Victory jig-saw on Fry's Cocoa tray") are studiously rescued from oblivion, or a holiday in Blackpool, where the family is to be found gripping the pier machine that gave you shocks.

The current would connect. We'd feel the buzz
the family circle, one continuous US!
The rhyming of "buzz" and "US" is, of course, another calculated affront.

Continuous is a splendidly rich book, full of wit, tenderness, honesty, intelligence and anger. It would be impossible to predict how *The School of Eloquence* will be completed, if indeed it can be, but I hope to enjoy a good many more poems in this line from the creator of the present sequence. Meanwhile Bloodaxe Books has brought out a pair of handsome pamphlets to show that Harrison has been engaged on other work besides his major obsession. *U.S. Martial* consists of eighteen squibs, translated into zealously scurrilous American English from the Latin of the great epigrammatist. *A Kumquat for John Keats* is a comically verbose meditation on the bitter-sweetness of life, for which the oxymoronic fruit provides a suitable metaphor: Both are slight productions by comparison with the Meredithian sonnets, but they are worth looking out for.

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commentary

A fanciful world

By Frances Spalding

Carel Weight RA
Royal Academy Diploma Galleries

"The world we live in" is the title of one of Carel Weight's paintings, and the theme of many in this exhibition. More particularly, this world is that of South London, of railway stations, red and yellow brick and overgrown trees in small back gardens; an arcuately pretending to gentility, scavenged and forlorn. What makes these paintings far from dreary is the sense of something electric in the atmosphere. The scenes are always inhibited and sometimes contain human or religious dramas. But even when the figures merely walk down the street one receives the impression that this is a world on edge.

If Carel Weight has a liking for the underside of life he has none for the art world and its critics, and enjoys "sending up the highbrows". He is, as he says, a little "out of the normal run of things" while also remaining happily and very firmly ensconced within the eccentric mainstream of English art. For many years Professor of Painting at the Royal College, he has also exhibited at the Royal Academy's annual summer exhibitions since 1931. He is a prolific artist; affectionately regarded by a great many painters who were his students; and admired by a wider than usual public, not least because he has always insisted on keeping his prices low. This retrospective surveys fifty years of his work, during which

period he has never been deflected, by modernism, market pressures or high-brow critics, from painting what interests him. From the moment (in 1932) when he portrayed an elderly lady swiping an escaped lion with her umbrella, it was clear that theoretical abstraction would pass him by.

He is also an intriguing figure because he unites two distinct strands in British art. While he was still a student (first at Hammersmith Art School, then at Goldsmith's College), Christopher Wood died. From the early paintings exhibited, one can guess that Weight first modelled himself on Wood, absorbing his naive style which was then popular among painters of the 7 & 5 Society. His touch is more graphic than Wood's, but still crudely expressive, and it gives an urgency to his four-panel painting describing the escape of a zebra (an animal also painted by Wood) from the zoo during an air raid. In order to exert his control of narrative Weight has clearly looked at Stanley Spencer, not at his technique but at his ability to deploy the drama across the entire scene. By applying an essentially painterly style to narrative, Weight is able to give it a refreshing immediacy: his paintings do tell a story but they also delight the eye.

Essential to his story is his choice of setting. A newspaper photograph of Crystal Palace gardens sent him to the spot in search of a background for his "Betrayal of Christ". He found a half-ruined flight of steps ornamented with a lifted urn that still hung on to its base by a thread. Placed in the centre of his picture, this urn becomes a slightly obvious

equivalent to the impending arrest. Elsewhere his use of background detail to enhance content is more subtle. In "Fury" a boy beats another while the rest of the gang run off, their flight repeated by the sharply receding wall. The approaching bobber causes less sense of panic than the branch that extends menacingly towards the victim and his oppressor. In "The Moment" a child stares straight out as if suddenly shocked by something seen; behind him the desolate empty street stretches across the long thin format like an echo of his scream.

Much of Carel Weight's subject matter may spring from his own childhood experiences, though Norman Rosenthal, in his interview with the artist printed in the catalogue, does not explore this. There is, however, an insistent strain of melancholy in this show, and a noticeable sympathy with suffering, even if the suffering is only unlocated fear. Weight is as much interested in the tensions of modern life as he is in his setting, and like Munch he makes them palpable by presenting them in a deliberately heightened key. He has no time for orthodox forms of religion but resorts frequently to biblical subjects as useful carriers of human drama. Moreover, his desire to give the normal a magical frisson leads him frequently to the supernatural. Ghosts make a regular appearance in his art and frequently trouble his street-walkers. After a while they seem matters-of-fact in this zany, fanciful world which in the hands of a different artist might quickly become parochial and restricting.



"The Assumption of the Virgin", 1972, by Carel Weight. The painting can be seen at the Carel Weight retrospective reviewed here.

A serious life

By Peter Keating

A Curious Life for a Lady
National Library of Scotland

Isabella L. Bird led the kind of life that seems calculated to mock our modern view of Victorian middle-class women. She began conventionally enough. Her father was a well-to-do, fiercely Sabbatarian, Church of England vicar, and Isabella grew up in the country parish of Grewelthorpe in Cheshire where, because of her weak constitution, she was encouraged to spend as much time as possible in the open air. In 1850, at the age of nineteen, she had an operation on her spine: it was not fully successful and continuing ill-health appeared to indicate a sedentary, semi-invalid, future for her.

Then in 1854 she was sent to Portsmouth, apparently in an attempt to cure her of insomnia. What happened to her sleepless nights is not recorded, but Portsmouth was good for her in other ways. Two articles about the visit were published in *The Leisure Hour*, and from that moment until her death in 1904, she travelled purposefully about the world, observing, negotiating, campaigning, and recording her impressions in a series of best-selling books.

Her first journey abroad was to Canada, and the United States; this led to the publication of *The Englishwoman in America* (1856) and the more specialized *Aspects of Religion in the United States* (1859). For the next twelve years she concentrated on Scotland. After the death of her father, Isabella had moved with her mother and sister to Edinburgh. It was here that she established a solid reputation as a journalist, publishing articles mainly in religious magazines on subjects as diverse as Ragged Schools, Latin hymns, and the poetry of Donne. She also began exploring the Highlands, and in 1861 had first visited the Cairngorms, and in 1862 the Ben Nevis area, and in 1863 the Ben Alder area, and in 1864 the Ben Alder area, and in 1865 the Ben Alder area, and in 1866 the Ben Alder area, and in 1867 the Ben Alder area, and in 1868 the Ben Alder area, and in 1869 the Ben Alder area, and in 1870 the Ben Alder area, and in 1871 the Ben Alder area, and in 1872 the Ben Alder area, and in 1873 the Ben Alder area, and in 1874 the Ben Alder area, and in 1875 the Ben Alder area, and in 1876 the Ben Alder area, and in 1877 the Ben Alder area, and in 1878 the Ben Alder area, and in 1879 the Ben Alder area, and in 1880 the Ben Alder area, and in 1881 the Ben Alder area, and in 1882 the Ben Alder area, and in 1883 the Ben Alder area, and in 1884 the Ben Alder area, and in 1885 the Ben Alder area, and in 1886 the Ben Alder area, and in 1887 the Ben Alder area, and in 1888 the Ben Alder area, and in 1889 the Ben Alder area, and in 1890 the 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commentary to the editor

A personal vision

By Charles Madge

Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker. Painter, Poet. Riverside Studios

I well remember Humphrey Jennings saving in conversation back in the 1930s that he did not in the least care what traces of himself he left behind. Yet eventually he left behind five films, quite a large number of photographs and paintings, a precious handful of poems and the manuscript, almost ready for publication, of *Pandemonium* - a massive collection of texts arranged chronologically and chosen to illustrate transformations in our way of looking at the world between 1660 and 1866. There was also his Cambridge thesis on Thomas Gray, which T. S. Eliot would have liked to publish, but which seems to have disappeared entirely; also, if my own memory and letters are to be trusted, I was shown in the early 1930s extensive notes for a history of English poetry which have likewise vanished.

It is by his films - especially his wartime films - that Jennings is principally remembered. Their emotional impact is as immediate now as when they were first shown; and it is possible that *Fires were Started* (1942) is the most notable work of art about the war that was produced during the war. To turn from the paintings and poems - with their unique kind of creativity, and also perhaps to be offered a key to the problem.

The exhibition at Riverside Studios includes forty-seven oil paintings, twenty drawings and watercolours and fourteen collages chosen with sensitive insight by Sir Roland Penrose, with whom Jennings helped to organize the International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936. The titles of the paintings often refer to nuclear images which held a persistent place in the painter's imagination. Thus there is a "House in the Woods" in 1935, and another in 1949; horses and locomotives recur through the 1930s; there is a "Landscape and River" in 1937 and modern ploughs in 1945, 1947 and 1948. The titles also reveal that Jennings's vision was historical - that he was in some sense working out for himself a history of the imagination in all its manifestations. Thus we have such titles as "London in the 19th Century", "Byron's House at Miltonsgate", "Statue of Richard Cobden at Salford", "The Great Fire of London", "Guy Fawkes", "William Morris" and so on. However, sometimes the title can only be related to the painting by a large imaginative leap, as when "Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton" shows a snowy mountain peak in the background and in the foreground three apples on a plinth of primes.

Many art critics and some painters have been unwilling to attribute much importance to the paintings, while accepting the emotional power and visual mastery of the films. One can understand this and yet be convinced that to get inside, or anywhere near, the special personal vision here expressed, the whole of Humphrey Jennings's work, or what remains of it, should be admitted as genuine. If only one could add to this the spoken word, could get Jennings to walk one round the exhibition, talking as he went. All those who heard him talking about poetry, about painting, about film, are agreed that there was nothing else in their experience to equal the brilliance, the originality, the spontaneity of his talk - most evanescent of art forms, I am not even sure that he would have talked so well if he had known that he was being recorded. His talks, in their own way, were a kind of performance, a verbal faculty, were simultaneously developed to an altogether exceptional extent.



Humphrey Jennings

Cicely in America during the war, notes and poems, and even a review for the *TLS* of *The English* by Ernest Barker, dated August 7, 1948.

Anyone prepared to go "in search of" the elusive Humphrey Jennings at Riverside Studios should, I think, turn from the paintings to the films and then back to the paintings again, drawing as much as possible on the available, alas, up till now in published form is the work which absorbed so much of his energy from 1943 up to his death in 1950. *Pandemonium*, originally accepted for publication by Herbert Read on behalf of Routledge, but later rejected on the strength of peculiarly idiotic comments by his colleagues. Later plans for publication have sometimes looked promising but have yet to be fulfilled. In my belief, only with the stature of Humphrey Jennings and of his productions, in all their diversity, become finally apparent. But the exhibition, and the book accompanying it, are performing a valuable service in once more drawing attention to a neglected genius, in whom visual and verbal faculties were simultaneously developed to an altogether exceptional extent.

Women and Pornography

Sir, - I should like to comment on two related reviews by J. G. Weightman and Roger Scruton (January 1). The three books reviewed deal with pornography, and sexism in language.

Leaving aside the value of the books themselves, my objection is that both reviewers give the powerful impression that they dislike not the contents of the books but the fact that they deal with issues which in themselves are seen as a threat; Weightman fears, rather hysterically, that if women listened to the arguments men might become extinct, whereas Scruton talks of an "assault" against which "we" need protection. In addition both articles demonstrate ignorance of the research that has been done in these fields, which weakens their arguments further.

J. G. Weightman takes exception to being excluded, as a male, from the audience of the two books he reviewed. If the books are not aimed at him, is he qualified to review them? However good or bad the books, the authors presumably have the right to choose their readership; a book for railway enthusiasts would necessarily exclude fishing buffs. For centuries women have found themselves excluded from the majority of what they see and read, whether it is philosophy, religion, literature or history.

Roger Scruton, reviewing Mary Vetterling-Braggin's *Sexist Language*, will not, or cannot, see how the English language excludes, makes invisible and belittles fifty per cent of the species. To him it is a "fantasy issue", unimportant because he himself is not excluded. He is quite right to say that "my sex is fundamental to my self-consciousness".

I think of myself as a map... He is privileged to have a language with which to express it. Women do not have that privilege, and it is arrogance to dismiss women's justified resentment of this fact as "hysteria". "Man", "mankind", "he", "they" are not neutral in English; they carry a male image and define the species as male. If they were neutral one could comfortably say "Man gives birth to live young" or "he breastfeeds". Because of the inevitable male (and therefore excluding) image of the words, the phrase sounds odd. Modern officialdom now talks more gently to "you", but "you" is a man - pick up any DHSS leaflet to prove it. If women are not excluded from normal language, whence the need for the very common "lady doctor" etc? What are women to make of programmes such as the BBC's "Making of Mankind"? Are they included? No - all the visual references were to the evolution of the male. (A scientific nonsense, by the way.) Being thus excluded, may not women at least react and discuss it among themselves, without having their discussions dismissed by J. G. Weightman as "sterile inter-female yammering"? Are those really the terms of useful criticism?

Mr. Weightman cannot believe it when he is told that women find the universal parading of the female body as the object of lust (but not of much else) deeply offensive. Would he do the same to a coloured man who told him he resented images of jolly coons with big rubbery lips and "rolling eyes"? He maintains that "rolling male lust" is the foundation of the whole point: women quite rightly object to this view of male-thing else. Yet Weightman claims to be an "average, liberal, English male" who has long been "sympathetic to the cause of women's rights". Playboy and the like are acceptable to this average male because they do him no harm, he enjoys it, and they may even help him on his wedding night. The women "look extremely attractive and healthy" so they must be choosing to sell themselves. In this way...

JANE AIKEN HODGE, 23 Eastport Lane, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1TL.

Dostoevsky and the Jews

Sir, - Both Robert Alter in his review of David L. Goldstein's *Dostoevsky and the Jews* (July 3) and James L. Rice (Letters, November 27) diagnose Dostoevsky "accuse" is more correct considering the contexts as suffering from paranoia and paranoid delusions. Rice compounds his error by declaring that Dostoevsky's epilepsy is evidence that he was more epileptic than non-epileptic have a psychosis, the relationship between these two disorders remains

acceptable (to men), but nevertheless they don't want their "nearest and dearest" staring out at (them) from the glossy pages. What price self-determination for women when the "average male" operates such double standards as these?

Roger Scruton, on the other hand, cannot believe that the English language negates the validity of women. Both have a lot of homework to do. Scruton dislikes much about these essays, for instance their "jejune premises" - an attribute well represented in his own writing. At the start he quibbles that "a person can be powerful without exercising the control oneself" is an unintelligible sentence. It is rather, but less so, the place of "oneself" in his own proposal of "himself" is male, and therefore inaccurate when referring to "persons". "A mammal feeds the baby himself" is not right; the word "himself" is only sometimes inclusive of both sexes, and that's not accurate enough. This is the true "grammatical aberration" and not the original example; it was artificially imposed barely a century ago.

In his last paragraph he complains about "unthinking prejudice", but his whole article reeks of it. What else could suddenly make him abandon his respect for the American Modern Languages Association - that bastion of serious criticism and literary scholarship" at the moment they decide to acknowledge the harmful effects of sexist language, except prejudice? Does he not have an "ounce of scepticism" or "the preparedness to entertain the possibility of one's own convictions" to tell him that they may be right and he wrong? Shrillness and hysteria may be in the mind of the beholder. Will research reveal his cause?

J. A. PENROSE, "2, Chapel Cottages, Joys Croft, Chichester, West Sussex.

Sir, - Is it too much to hope that under its new regime your paper will give significant books about women for women to review? J. G. Weightman, reviewing Andrea Dworkin and Susan Griffin (January 1), admits to feeling at a loss, declares himself a "liberal English male" sympathetic to women's rights, and then indulges in a rambling discussion of women's problems calculated to infuriate even a non-violent feminist like me. Pornography, according to him, is a comparatively harmless modern phenomenon. The girls who are photographed in pornographic poses look "attractive and healthy". So much better than the diseased Victorian prostitutes with their implied threat to Linda Lovelace, like the fox, probably liked it. Little boys will sometimes play with dolls' houses if no one teases them. And many other weighty observations of the kind.

Just in case any reader has failed to get the message, the second page of Mr. Weightman's long review is illustrated by a picture from a new book on Eastern Erotic Art. It shows one of the celestial females who reward dead heroes with heavenly pleasures in the act of unfastening her skirt.

JANE AIKEN HODGE, 23 Eastport Lane, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1TL.

Translating 'Beowulf'

Sir, - Jean Quenell's French translation of *Beowulf* is not, as T. A. Shippey states (January 1), "the first over a century". Walter Thomas's translation was published in 1919 by Henri Didier.

Incidentally, in this translation, Unferth "éclat assis au pied du maître des Scyldings".

JACQUES MOURADIAN, 10 rue de la Terrasse, 75017 Paris.

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'The Pursuit of Signs'

Sir, - As an undergraduate reading English at a university torn, as the media would have it, by the effects of "elite fashions" in theoretical criticism, I was surprised to read John Bayley's review of Jonathan Culler's *The Pursuit of Signs* (January 1).

Forgetting for a moment the Englishman's innate distrust of the "latest contraptions" of his fellows in any field, we ought at least to try to ensure that his scepticism is not rooted in basic errors of acronyms. These might take the form of confusing semiotics with the larger scope of the post-Structuralist enterprise; of fearing the "dominion of terminology" without (except in the case of *fabula* and *szuzhet*) seeming to appreciate its potential for the elucidation of an area fraught with preconceptions if not with misconceptions; and, worst, of acquiescing in the panacea of "the interpretive process" as though that were an established feature of all life-surfaces. John Bayley suggests that it is and always will be but do we know what constitutes our interpretations of texts, if ours they be? Are those interpretations not themselves subject to analysis, and if so, do we not then move into a more searching realm of criticism? We may continue to "interpret" at any stage in the discourse, it is true, but one of the functions of the semiotic "discipline" is to afford us access to a better understanding of hermeneutics as conceived in its widest sense.

"Normal subjective methods" were made to work as long as we cared to pluck our efforts at such a level - that of short hops down a valley-slope. We can continue to read the names of distinguished American writers who periodically endorse some leftist cause or other in full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* to realize that messianism is an on-going occupational malady of literary figures. Do these signers of petitions, pronouncements and denunciations suffer from paranoia? Not at all, only from the universal vagaries of the human spirit.

Goldstein, drawing an entirely different inference, quotes from *The Possessed*, the narrator saying "Sipan Trofimovich assured me on one occasion that the greatest artist could be the worst secondhand dealer between the two." It is inconceivable that Dostoevsky, who certainly considered himself a great artist, did not look into his own soul when he wrote these lines. Then as now, the novelist as political activist and advocate and the novelist as novelist wrote in two different worlds. There is only occasional seepage from the political into the literary, for which we can be eternally grateful. Who can deny that Dostoevsky despite the narrowness of many of his political, religious and nationalist views was a man of great compassion and nobility of spirit?

JOSEPH L. WHELAN, 820 Arlington, Petoskey, Michigan 49770.

Among this week's contributors

VALERIE ADAMS is a lecturer in English at University College London.

ROSEMARY ASHTON's *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860* was published in 1980.

MARY BEARD is a lecturer in Classics at King's College, London.

ALAN BELL is the Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.

PEARL K. BELL was until recently a regular reviewer of fiction for the magazine *Commentary*.

T. J. BINYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

ROBERT BOYERS is editor of *Salmagundi* and Professor of English at Skidmore College, New York.

JOHN BROWN is co-editor of the *James Joyce Broadsheet*.

EDWARD BURNS is a lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool.

ROBERT BURCHFIELD is Editor-in-Chief of Oxford English Dictionaries.

G. P. BUTLER is Professor of German at the University of Bath.

F. L. CARSTEN's books include *Fascist Movements in Austria*, 1971.

A. O. J. COCKSHUTT's books include *The Achievement of Walter Scott*, 1969.

D. C. COLEMAN is Emeritus Professor of Economic History at the University of Cambridge.

LESLIE CUNLIFFE is co-editor of the anthology *The Dirty Bits*, 1981.

ities underlying our own formulations about literature, we will want to experiment with elementary aerobatics - to focus better on the problems of reading well.

Without wishing to be drawn into a defence of recent poetics, which no doubt can be allied with "conventional practices" by those who understand both, I would say that the awakening of our critical capabilities, and sensibilities, to new modes of reading will "destroy our sense of the truth in fiction" if that truth is the glib "real human nature" of *The Wind in the Willows*. If fiction must defer to truth, then we must know more about the composition of this truth. We should be as persistent and circumspect as Johnson was in accounting for the ragged, overlapping interface of art and "its counterpart in experience". If we are not, if we conduct criticism too lazily, our flying machine will grow too full of holes, and we will forget how carefully it was designed from the wreck of its predecessor.

RICHARD YARLOTT, Queens' College, Cambridge CB3 9ET.

Military Drinking

Sir, - Oswyn Murray (Letters, December 25) asks if there is any close connection between drinking rituals and styles of warfare, and whether different regiments have different mess customs corresponding to their functions in war.

I am afraid that the answer is in the negative. Different armies and different regiments within them certainly have different drinking rituals and habits, and Oswyn Murray's explanation, in the second paragraph of his letter, of the link between soldiering and drinking is valid. But differences in drinking habits and rituals are linked, not to differences in military function, but to social origin. Expensive regiments have expensive drinking habits, linked to the drinking habits of the social group from which they are drawn. The habits and rituals of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, English, French, German,

American, Russian and other soldiers derive from their racial and social links.

Some rituals are based on historical tradition, notably that of certain regiments accustomed to entertain royalty in the eighteenth century. Their royal guests were known to succumb to regimental hospitality before their hosts, and it was considered tactful not to expect officers to rise to drink the loyal toast (the Navy do not do so, on the grounds of insufficient head room, a convenient excuse for those unable to remain upright in a slight swell).

There is even one cavalry regiment, of which the officers continue to converse in a lively manner while the toast is drunk and the national anthem played. I once had the experience of accompanying a distinguished French general to lunch with this regiment. In spite of my previous "briefing", he could not bring himself to observe the regiment's custom, particularly as they had all stood rigidly to attention in silence for the toast of "Monsieur le Président" and the strains of the Marseillaise.

Of all the strange and impractical military drinking rituals, I hand the palm to that of Walter Scott's nine-and-twenty squires of Branksome Hall:

They carved at the meat with gloves of steel,
and they drank the red wine through the helmet barred.

'Not a ritual I should like to attempt in my expensive mess kit!

MICHAEL CARVER, House of Lords.

Pangrams

Sir, - David Hunter (Letters, November 27) offers English pangrams of thirty and thirty-one letters. But shorter examples exist. Edward F. Moore, in the *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory* (Volume 26, No 5, September 1980, page 609) gives three examples of just twenty-six letters that he, C. E. Shannon

and H. O. Pollak had found some years ago. The best of them is: "Squidgy fez, blank jimp crwth vox".

This example had been quoted earlier by Martin Gardner (*Sixth Book of Mathematical Games from Scientific American*, W. H. Freeman, San Francisco, no date, page 149) who explains that "the sentence is spoken by a man of the Near East to his short, squat fez as he pulls it down over his ears to blank out the thin delicate voice (notes) of a crwth being played nearby".

Professor Moore also gives an example of a sentence which uses each sound of the English language (with American pronunciation) exactly once:

"Hum, thou whirring fusion, yes, Joy, pay each show; vie, thaw two wool dock bags".

N. J. A. SLOANE, Bell Laboratories, 600 Mountain Avenue, Murray Hill, New Jersey 07974.

Sir, - I note a frequent misattribution of the following familiar palindromes: "T. Eliot, top bard, notes putrid tang emanating, is sad. I'd assign it a name; 'Gnat dirt upset on drab pot toilet'".

This exercise was written in 1960 by Alastair Reid, the Scots poet and translator. In several book collections it has been mistakenly attributed to W. H. Auden, who heard it from Reid and was so amused that he often quoted it to his friends.

WILLARD R. ESPY, 30 Beekman Place, New York, NY 10022.

S. J. Perelman

Sir, - Philip French notes (December 25) that S. J. Perelman uses a word that the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* appear unac-

quainted with - "supercasles", used inscrutably with reference to the sex-life of Lady Ottoline Morrell.

It would be surprising to find the word in any dictionary. It is an ad-man's neologism applied to percale sheets and thus not so inscrutable after all. Perelman was in the habit of adapting and mocking all sorts of pretentious jargon. No doubt he was genuinely taken with obscure terms, but he was usually making fun of the usage of others at least some of the time.

ROBERT L. MONTGOMERY, 43a Lennox Gardens, London SW1X 0DF.

Books in Science

Sir, - Redmond O'Hanlon in his admirable notice of the British Library's "Famous Books in Science" exhibition (*Commentary*, December 18) made a natural slip in describing Vesalius's muscle-man "lurching towards us out of an unthought Swiss landscape", since the book was printed at Basel. But Harvey Cushing recorded in his magisterial bibliography that the consecutive landscape behind the series of muscle-men was identified, fifty years ago now, as Abano Terme, "a fashionable watering-place south-west of Padua", where the book was written. Cushing imagined "Jan van Calcar, Vesalius's artist, on a free afternoon sketching the landscape panorama, which he subsequently cut up as a background for the muscle figures".

WILLIAM LE FANU, The Royal College of Surgeons of England, 35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PN.

We regret that in the notice of Peter Padfield's *Rule Britannia* (November 20) the name of the author was misspelled.

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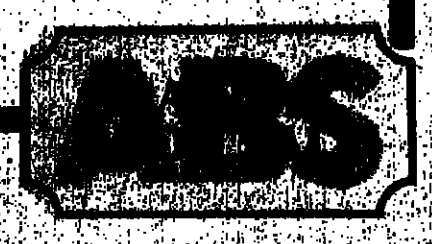
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In a shared tradition

By Richard Brown

MARY T. REYNOLDS:

Joyce and Dante
The Shaping Imagination
375pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £16.10.
0 691 06446 6

HERMIONE DE ALMEIDA:

Byron and Joyce through Homer
Don Juan and Ulysses
233pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 30072 6

In *Joyce and Dante* Mary Reynolds sets out to show that the works of Dante are a strong presence in Joyce's writing, third only to the unmistakable presences of Shakespeare and Homer. She argues that the relationship of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom is based on that of Dante and Virgil in the *Divine Comedy* as much as on that of Telemachus and Odysseus in the *Odyssey* which has served for previous critics. Unsettling to Latin, whom Dr Reynolds identifies as a false father-figure and representative of a simoniacal clergy in the *Inferno*, is supposed to be behind Joyce's characters Wells, the mundane trainee priest in *Stephen Hero*, and Father Conmee, the comfortable worldly priest of "Wandering Rocks". Stephen's "epiphanic" visions in *A Portrait of the Artist* mirror Dante's eclogue of Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*, and the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses* is full of allusions to Francesca and Paolo, the famous doomed lovers of Canto II of the *Inferno*. Both writers it is said, have a fascination with water, and place artists in the centre of their work. Joyce, Dr Reynolds believes, built structural parallels into his work, as she demonstrates in an elaborate infernal schema for the *Dubliners* stories, and Joyce's writing even contains prosodic echoes of terza rima.

As one would expect, her book is most convincing when it examines those places in Joyce's texts where Dante is evidently the determining presence. There is a passage in *Stephen Hero*, for instance, where the young Stephen imagines the composition of a Dantesque *Inferno* which he might populate with his acquaintances. In the "Aeolus" episode of *Ulysses* there is a difficult section headed "Rhymes and Reasons" where Stephen puzzles over Dante's verse. And Joyce, according to his Trieste pupil, Oscar Schwartz, kept Dante's lines on Helen of Troy on his desk beneath a photograph of an ugly old woman, and delighted in an irreverent calculation of Helen's probable age when Dante met her in the *Inferno*.

These immediately apparent items may have been sufficient to satisfy an earlier period of Joyce criticism but they are not enough for as erudite and experienced a Joycean scholar as Dr Reynolds. She brings into play the now formidable array of sophisticated Joycean technology. She appends a 100-page list of all discernible allusions to Dante. She treats the complete scholarly Joyce oeuvre, the poems and the drama, the book reviews and the lectures, the letters, early drafts and notebooks, as well as the major works. She has researched in detail the history of Joyce's reading of Dante, from unearthing his college curriculum to acquiring the actual copies of Dante's works which he possessed in Trieste. She is moreover one of the first Joyceans to have brought out an interpretative rather than a textual study which uses the recently published *Archives* reproduction of Joyce's manuscripts, and thus she is able to trace allusions and also to study when and how they were incorporated into, or in some cases omitted from, the final text. The book is, however, neither stylistically a success nor quite a critical comparison, but a characteristically Joycean attempt to identify and classify all the relevant allusions, to identify the sources, and to make the reader aware of the significance of the allusions in Joyce's work.

Joyce, or the many other allusion-tracing books that Joyce's writing has inspired.

Dr Reynolds's almost obsessive desire to be exhaustive and precise has the unfortunate effect of tipping the interpretative balance in favour of inclusiveness. The "inconstant series of concentric circles of varying gradations of light" made by the Blooms' lampshade on the ceiling in *Ulysses*, to take one small example, seems in no real sense to depend upon Dantean cosmology so much as on the consistently analytic and universalizing language of the episode. Dr Reynolds's heavy reliance on "suppressed", "distorted" and "de-liberately indirect" reminiscences may prompt the sceptical reader to enquire whether anywhere in Joyce's writing there may be said to be absolutely no Dante at all. To ask such a question would be to threaten the charmed circle of correspondences on which the impressively constructed edifice of this book rests. Dante was indeed important to Joyce and we may now be assured that the furthest extent of that importance has been comprehensively charted.

There can have been few important authors to whom Joyce has not been compared or to whom he has not been considered to allude - even if we leave out of the reckoning all those subsequent authors whose least spark of verbal ingenuity has instant-

ly been dubbed Joycean. There is sanction enough for this analogic practice in Joyce's writing itself, but as a favoured critical mode it seems to have started in those highly significant years after the publication of *Ulysses* in Paris in 1922 but before the book was legally available in England or America. Stuart Gilbert's book-length defence, published in 1930, set the tone for later critics. He insisted on the Homeric analogy and thereby enabled the scandalous and revolutionary Joyce to be accepted, in the words of the defence counsel at the 1933 trial in America, as "an austere Olympian". Since then readers of Joyce have hoped for much from analogic studies (*Joyce and the Bible*, *Joyce and Homer*, *Joyce and Shakespeare*) and three of the most successful, perhaps for more than one reason, have been in many cases such studies. In many cases such studies have been intended to cope with the enormous difficulties of Joyce's texts by pitching them in the apparently steeper ground of another writer's work. Comparative study has been, for many critics, a way - as Eliot said of Joyce's Homeric scheme - of "giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy" which they have found in the later Joyce. Even the intrepid Adeline Glasheen has been tempted into the rather unsatisfactory suggestion (she herself calls it "eccentric") that "Finnegans

Wake is all about Shakespeare". Mary Reynolds says that she is "mindful that Dante alone is not the key to Joyce" but her book does not leave her readers quite mindful enough.

The potential claustrophobia of interpreting Joyce through some single other author may seem to have been recognized: a short while ago we had *Joyce between Freud and Jung*, and now there appears *Byron and Joyce through Homer*. However, Hermione de Almeida is, however, not strictly a Joycean at all so much as a broad humanist literary critic. Her book is written with considerable verve (the very first word is "Flayed"); she has a healthy disrespect for scholarly piety-holing and the dissection of textual minutiae; and she pursues a rollicking, garrulous and commonsensical, though still intelligent and informed, argument. Her central contention is that Byron and Joyce share a fundamentally similar response to Homer and that *Don Juan* and *Ulysses* provide for a later age what Homer's epic gave to his contemporaries in Greece. Byron and Joyce appear as the twin representatives of a rationalist, nineteenth-century admiration for "Homer and his unchristian heart". They are held to share an equivocal attitude, part reverence, part irreverence, to their source - "if Homer is touchstone he is also punching-bag" as the author

colourfully puts it. She skims over the details of classical reference in both authors and takes some licence in her interpretative sweep; but she is able to convey the courage and élan that are part of the appeal of both modern transformations of the epic.

Tradition is one of the key terms of her argument and she traces the development of reductive mock-epic from Petronius to Pope by way of background to these later achievements. Morality, another familiar concern of liberal literary criticism, is important to her too; and she sketches out the positive statements of two authors whose work has always been difficult to pin down in moral terms. Byron and Joyce, she argues, both offer modern, transvaluated versions of Homeric ideals of individual virtue (*areté*) and of social duty (*páideia*). Their choice of the *Odyssey* as primary model is significant in that they build on Odysseus' virtues of curiosity and circumspection rather than on the militaristic ideals of the *Iliad*.

Little of Hermione de Almeida's material is new. But her book offers a courageous and emphatic attempt to refresh our orientation toward Joyce in particular, in accordance with her enthusiastic humanist perspective - an attempt that will be warmly welcomed.

Ruling the field full of folk

By Paula Neuss

ANNA P. BALDWIN:

The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman
107pp. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. £15.
0 85991 073 3

Anna Baldwin aims to set Langland's discussions of government in the fourteenth-century context. She believes that historians have too often used the poem to illustrate their own views of medieval history, but "if history is put to the service of the poem, it becomes clear how very much an awareness of the historical and political context can elucidate Langland's lines".

There are certainly a good many that require elucidation. Readers of *Piers Plowman* are apt to be puzzled by the episode relating the marriage of Lady Mede: the Dreamer seems to get more than he bargained for when he asks to see Falsehood. Dr Baldwin thinks that Lady Mede "represents a serious late medieval

problem", i.e. the corrupt power of the nobility, which could only be solved by the king's asserting absolute authority in the way that Richard II's government attempted. Langland apparently expresses his support for Richard's behaviour through his portrayal of the king in the Lady Mede episode, but then seems to take a different tack. Dr Baldwin asks, "How can the absolutist ideal of monarchy embodied in the *Visto* king be made compatible with the more merciful, even democratic ideal practised by Piers, Conscience and Christ?"

The answer is not simple. Nothing to do with Langland ever is, though one of the points the poet does seem to make clearly, is that men can spend a good part of their lives asking the wrong questions and coming up with the wrong answers. Dr Baldwin sees Piers, Conscience and Christ as rulers, analogous to the *Visto* king, and as continuing a discussion about government begun in the Lady Mede section: "Langland relates the social world, where the *Visto* king or Piers tries to govern, with the whole created Universe where Christ is king, and the world of the mind, where Conscience tries

to rule". She finds Piers submissive, Christ merciful and Conscience lacking in authority at the end of the poem, but concludes that Langland's ideas are not inconsistent, that they simply change. In fact these figures are not usually seen as equivalents: they take different roles in different planes of allegory, and it does not seem right to suggest that they "provide structural links between different sections of the poem" - that is done by the Dreamer, who travels between the various worlds.

Anna Baldwin's citations from medieval political writings and historians can be fascinating (her comments on mercenary marriages, for example), and do highlight parts of *Piers Plowman*. But it should not

be treated as just a political tract. Only parts of the poem are relevant to her thesis - those that may contain topical material, such as (besides the Lady Mede episode) the fable of the rats and the cat, scenes with Conscience and (oddy) Christ's duel with the devil. Of course it would be a strange account of the poem that left that, the climax, out, but it is disappointing to find the section "into which", Dr Baldwin admits, "Langland poured most meaning and poetry" mostly for its legal language. And much of the poem is unaccounted for in her book: the Dreamer is missing altogether, and with him any recognition that the poem is a dream-vision resistant to logical analysis.

Scant consolation

By Valerie Adams

F. ANNE PAYNE:

Chaucer and Menippean Satire
290pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £13.50.
0 299 08170 2

F. Anne Payne sees as predominant in Chaucer's work a particular frame of mind, characteristic also of Lucian's satire: the intellectual freedom conferred by the realization that all ideals are unattainable, all theories faulty. She examines in detail three "Menippean" works - *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale* and the *Knights' Tale*. These are all ill-judged in some way to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, the link between Lucian and Chaucer.

Agreeing with Northrop Frye's view that the *Consolation* owes its popularity to the fact that it is a Menippean satire, or anatomy, she argues that Lady Philosophy moves inconsequently from one set of ideals to another in the course of her demonstration that the mind must be kept free. This reading is not very persuasive, and neither is the comparison with Lucian. It seems more likely that the *Consolation's* popularity in the Middle Ages was due in part to its presentation of a mind in conflict struggling to grasp the nature of truth. The comic flight of the Boethian soul in search of harmony is far removed from the irreverent, jaunty to the heavens in Lucian's *Caronemippus*.

Payne is interested in Chaucerian man's confusion as he tries and fails to

understand his world, and she suggests that Chaucer's main debt to Boethius was his "Menippean vision". Her accounts of the ideas behind Chaucer's philosophical allusions are sometimes questionable. In the *Knights' Tale* she sees an opposition between "love's law", or "natural law", and "positive law", and misses Chaucer's irony at the expense of the character who sets himself up as the champion of "love's law" without understanding its significance. In the *Nun's Priest's Tale* she sees mockery of two different philosophical views (those of "the hooly doctour Augustyn" or Boece, or the Bishop Bradwardyn"), but this seems over-ingenious. The reader of this *Tale* does need to know something about contemporary debates on free will and divine foreknowledge in order to enjoy to the full the question of whose plot - God's or the fox's - Chaucer is acting in, but Chaucer is not a systematic philosopher.

The discussion of Chaucer in the context of Lucian is in the end restricting: Chaucer's interest is not in the clash of ideas, as such. As a Christian satirist, however elusive, his concern is with their moral implications.

Volume XXIX of the series *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* is a new edition of Sebastian Castellio's *De Arte Dubitandi et Confidendi*, Ignorandi: et Sciendi. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 68 guilders, 90/4 06344 7. This edition prefaces from the manuscript in the Obsequenti Bibliothek, Rotterdam, includes several chapters omitted from the 1937 edition.

On and off the wagon

By Rosemary Ashton

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH:

Benjamin the Waggoner
Edited by Paul F. Betz
356pp. Brighton: Harvester. £40.
0 8537 513 8

The editor of this minor Wordsworth poem, better known under its published title, "The Waggoner", believes it has hitherto unrecognized claims on our critical attention. It is, he reminds us, Wordsworth's "most extended effort" in the mock-heroic vein. This fact might be rather a discouragement than an incentive, since Wordsworth is notoriously least secure when being humorous, and in any case seldom aims primarily at humour.

Wordsworth's own comments, quoted in Paul F. Betz's introduction, are hardly encouraging either. From 1812 he compared the poem unfavourably with "Peter Bell", with which it has affinities. Both mock-heroic poems were published in 1819, and both caused sniggers and parodies in the periodicals. Wordsworth himself preferred the "higher tone of imagination" of "Peter Bell", dismissing "The Waggoner" as "fanciful" though written "con amore". Yet Lamb, to whom it was dedicated, praised the "spirit of beautiful tolerance" in the poem, and caught the intended spirit of fun.

What this admirably researched and presented edition highlights are the peculiar qualities and problems presented by Wordsworth's shorter narratives. Betz gives us a detailed history of this much rewritten poem, the full text of the 1806 manuscript, "Benjamin the Waggoner", and on facing pages the first published version of "The Waggoner" of 1819.

Expanding egos

By Jean Wilson

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN:

Fictions of the Self 1550-1800
302pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £12.30 (paperback, £5.05).
0 691 06448 2

Moving with grace through three centuries and four languages, Arnold Weinstein traces the developing interplay between the self and the world as it is reflected in the works with which he deals. He argues that in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century novels (*Lezardillo de Tormes*, *La Vida del Buscón*, *Simplicissimus*, *La Princesse de Clèves*) no separation is made between the personality's existence as psychic self and as physical body. This is succeeded by a period in which there is the possibility of individual personal development, in which the power of the self can triumph over a hostile environment, and the world is forced to endorse the protagonist's own image of his or her self (*Moll Flanders*, *La Vie de Marianne*, *Joseph Andrews*).

But this optimism is brief, and the next group of novels Professor Weinstein examines (*Manon Lescaut*, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, *Clarissa*, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*) portrays a conflict between the self and the expectations and limitations imposed on it by external forces. The characters in these novels put psychological fulfilment (as opposed to physical or social in the earlier novels) as their paramount aim, and are destroyed in their quest by a world which has other priorities than individual development. Finally, Weinstein looks at a group of books (*Le Neveu de Rameau*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Rousseau's Confessions*) which celebrate "the freedoms of language and imagination over and against the poverty of matter and experience".

Parallel with this developing view of the self, and as Weinstein shows, an essential aspect of it, is the value placed upon, and the attitude to, language as a means of self-expression. The early protagonists use language as a tool for survival, as they use other resources such as their bodies and the weaknesses of those around them. Moll Flanders and Marianne "achieve selfhood largely through confession, but other rewards and other appetites are at play in these texts". In the later texts Werther and Des Grieux yearn for complete relationships, and language is not in itself sufficient for them; Clarissa does find language sufficient as a means of self-expression, but she dies in the process. Only in the last group of works can language become in itself a means of transcending external circumstance.

Weinstein writes well (except in his introduction, which is full of trendy jargon-brokers, a characteristic totally absent in the lucid main text); he has an ability to encapsulate a character or a characteristic in a neat phrase - Marianne is "a moral porcupine" in *Tristram Shandy* the "hobby-horse" replaces the "horse". He does not mince words about his subjects: *La Vida del Buscón* is a "filthy book". His obvious enthusiasm for the works he likes, and his humane range of knowledge, make this book a delight to read, and the implicit recognition of the European nature of culture in the period with which he deals is a reproach to more chauvinist and limited scholars.

To lament that Professor Weinstein does not deal with other books in so long and comprehensive a work is perhaps a demand for more of the same (I wish he had included Nabokov's *The Invincible Traveller*), rather than a criticism of a limitation; but I think his argument would have been strengthened by a wider range of reference. So good a writer should not use "elementary" when he means "elementary". And it is distressing that Princeton University Press is following OUP in putting texts in the original language in an appendix, with translations in the text; it is book so conscious of European culture should be the last place to adopt this practice.

with a critical apparatus including all Wordsworth's tinkering for subsequent editions, as well as Coleridge's comments on the manuscript. The usual view, that Wordsworth generally spoils when he revises, is largely upheld by a study of the changes between 1806 and 1819. The tone of the unpublished version is, on the whole, bolder, more bantering and bathetic, more reminiscent of Burns's genial tone in "Tam O'Shanter". We know that Wordsworth admired and aimed to catch Burns's note of kindly mocking remonstrance towards his "hero". In Canto Two, the best sustained section of the poem, and interestingly, the least revised, he shows that he, like Burns, can master the small drama of a man's temptation to drink, his weakness and his extenuating qualities:

At last this tottering day of June,
This long, long day is going out;
The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune,
Twisting his watchman's rattle about.
That busy, busy Bird
Is all that can be heard
In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon.

Yet there are odd Wordsworthian flashes of imaginative observation, as in the description of Benjamin on the morning after the revel (omitted, unfortunately, from all the published versions):

And some sober thoughts arise
To steal the wandering from his eyes.

Elements of the "egotistical sublime" exist, too, mixing strangely with the mock-heroic. Wordsworth clearly sensed this, for he omitted from all published versions a lyrical passage commemorating a rock on which the Wordsworths, Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson had carved their names. But he retained the Epilogue, in which the poet intrusively tells of the loss to him of Benjamin and his waggon. Here personal sentiment reigns to the exclusion of humour:

Yes I, and all about me here,
Through all the changes of the year,
Had seen him through the mountains go.

In pomp of mist or pomp of snow.
In short, "Benjamin the Waggoner" is a good example of the pros and cons of "Wordsworthianism": gentle humour which sometimes works, but not always; personal intrusions which usually do not succeed; natural and human descriptions of varying quality; and a fine sense of comic catastrophe somewhat detracted from by ill-matched lyricism. Scholars will be grateful for this volume, which will help them assess Wordsworth's habits of composition. Less dedicated readers will be indifferent to its revelations and probably also to the poem, which, after all, remains one of Wordsworth's lesser achievements.



Atop the camel

By Edward Burns

LAURA BROWN:

English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760
An Essay in Generic History
240pp. Yale University Press. £12.30.
0 300 02585 8

The Grand Survey, the careful marshalling and classification of as many plays as possible, seems to have become the dominant approach to critical discussion of the drama of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a tidy method, but seldom exciting or revelatory. Laura Brown's *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760* is older than most, a plea for everything and everything in its place.

By A. O. J. Cockshut

DENNIS WALDER:

Dickens and Religion
232pp. George Allen and Unwin. £12.50.
0 04 80006 X

The literary weakness of Dickens's overtly religious passages has been a commonplace almost since he began to write. As early as 1842, the *Christian Remembrancer*, a High Church organ, was briskly dismissing the sentimentalism of the death of Little Nell. Those who disagreed, like Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, were usually those who actively preferred sentiment to religion.

There have been three general explanations. Some have said that since Dickens's own religious system (or perhaps more correctly sentiment) was muddled, thin and unconvincing, it is natural that it should have issued in weak writing. Others have maintained that Dickens did not deeply believe in the system he professed and promulgated, that he spent his time either deceiving himself or deceiving others, and that this failure of sincerity issued in weak, over-emphatic writing, and in a general failure of the sense of reality. The third view, argued recently with persuasive eloquence by John Carey, is that Dickens was imaginatively bound to the things his judgement and conscience disapproved, and thus always tended to write badly about the things he admired. (And this tendency is by no means confined to the religious sphere. No one doubts that there is in the world such a thing as maternal love, or that Dickens approved of it, yet he always wrote weakly about it.) It will be observed that to adopt any one of these explanations does not preclude the adoption of either or both of the others. Indeed, I would maintain myself that all three are in some measure true.

And there is another point. Most authors can be loosely grouped under the heading realist (Pope, Johnson, Jane Austen, Trollope) or dreamer (Keats, Yeats, Lawrence). But Dickens is a rare case of an author who was both in an extreme degree, so that he can describe a London street with more exact detail than Balzac would have given, and at the same time effortlessly endow it with a visionary quality. Now Dickens's religious passages, except when satirical about people like Mrs Pardiggle and Mrs Clennam, invariably show him as the dreamer. This must suggest the suspicion that for him God was not indisputably there.

It is sometimes said that Dickens failed because the nineteenth century was an age of religious uncertainty. It was; but the explanation will not serve. The great Victorians in general were unlike Dickens in that they could write well about religion, and not only those for whom God was indisputably there. Not only

Newman and Hopkins but George Eliot, Trollope, Hardy and Pater all wrote eloquently on the subject. Why not Dickens?

Now we come to a contrary critical movement, to which Dennis Walder's very useful, well-written and well-researched book belongs. It denies our major; it says that the tradition that Dickens was weak in this way is false. This movement first came to my attention when the late lamented Dr Leavis sternly rebuked me for failing to perceive a profound religious message in the passages describing the Alps in *Little Dorrit*, and with his usual admirable boldness compared Dickens to Blake as a great visionary religious writer. But like Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, were usually those who actively preferred sentiment to religion.

He tells us with obvious approval that Dickens believed that human nature was naturally good. In part, no doubt, this was a healthy reaction against the monstrous doctrines of total depravity and reprobation, which figure (I should say) far more prominently in Dickens's unfavourable religious portraits than they did in Victorian society generally. But Walder then omits to notice that Dickens in practice was very far from thinking people naturally good. Was Quilp naturally good, or Miss Murdstone, or Uriah Heep, or Mr. Gremgins, or Compeyson or Silas Wegg? Perhaps there is a connection between thinking people naturally good in theory, and thinking most of them unconscionable villains in practice. An optimistic view of human nature leaves the sinner without excuse. Would anyone be willing to deny that Trollope, who did not think human nature naturally good, is a more charitable judge than Dickens?

This leads on to the only general weakness in Walder's book. While he is a capable expositor of religious ideas and feelings, he is not equally strong at penetrating their literary consequences. His bent is perhaps more towards the history of ideas than to literary criticism proper. He tends to give us Dickens's religious ideas in the raw, before they had been heated in that awe-inspiring, flawed and wonderful crucible of his imagination.

The aesthetics of the exotic

By Raymond Firth

ROBERT LAYTON:

The Anthropology of Art
227pp. Granada. £15.
0 246 11511 4

One winter about ten years ago I looked from my upstairs window over the snow-covered quadrangle of a university in the eastern United States of America. The white expanse was cut by a series of dark diagonal lines of swept paths. I photographed the pattern and called it "snow art". But this raised a problem. Could the pattern properly be called art? If the essence of art is the recognition of form, then for me this was art. But the recognition must be not merely intellectual, a consciousness of boundary, shape, physical relationship, a kind of idle geometry; it must also involve some sensation of pleasure or concern, some emotional stirring, and give rise to some more general reflections on meaning. For me this was so, and I wanted to preserve the image. But then what about creativity? I had done nothing, or almost nothing, to make those paths which criss-crossed the campus; the snow had been dispersed by giant brushes or melted away by the pressure of countless feet going to and from lectures, and neither brushes nor feet had meant to create art. Yet what differentiated this striking pattern of paths in the snow from those much-advertised ploughings of lines in the desert sands or draping of rock cliffs in plastic sheeting? Was it that the latter were intentional creations of suggestive form whereas the patterns in the snow, though cognate, were phenomena, not indeed of nature, but of unintended human activity? Can art happen by accident? Yes, I thought, but only by an act of human transformation so that the accidental, the meaningless, is given meaning. Yet as Picasso demonstrated, the transformation must be implemented; the vision of the mind must be translated with force and economy into concrete form.

Such issues of recognition, intention, creativity, are commonplace in discussions about art and aesthetic sensitivity. But they all assume the involvement of human personality and human relations, and necessarily they touch at some points the concerns of anthropology which include problems of the roles of men and women in the artistic life, their goals, the groups and institutions through which they try to reach those goals, and their values and the sanctions for their conduct. In art people express their own particular interests, but these relate to the structures of their society. For anthropology, then, questions about the nature of the various traditions of art in different societies imply questions about the origins and status of the artists: for whom do they work? What is the social character of the market for their product? What are their rewards in material as well as material terms? What cultural ideas and values do their products express? How far are their forms of expression unique to themselves or do they follow generally understood conventions?

Ideally, the anthropology of art should cover the whole human field. It should range in time from palaeolithic cave painting in the Dordogne to the latest oil hung on the wall of a commercial boardroom; and in place, from an Eskimo mask representing a shaman's vision, to a Swiss Tyrolean mask of grimes and threat in ritual dances, or a Japanese mask of the aristocratic Nô play. But the anthropology of art should primarily be concerned with the human relations of the art rather than with its aesthetic qualities. When it comes to interpreting most of these masks, for instance, it is significant that they are primarily intended to be seen in movement, especially in dancing, and that they are essentially a male prerogative, not to be worn by women, even though they may portray female features or acknowledge women as their origin in myth of discovery. In Western art an anthropologist's role of "Gipsy" for example, would involve not only his place in the history of painting or in the development of Picasso's thought and mastery of art; but on the social and political context of its creation, its

symbolism, and more recently on the ideological and pragmatic reasons for its transfer from New York to Spain. The anthropology of art might even pursue themes of a more general nature in a neutral, systematic way – the intricately connected roles of the various sets of people involved in the modern art market, their social and economic background, the conventions by which they operate; the nature of the demand for art objects as aesthetic response, status marker or investment resource; the relation in terms of opinion and acquisition between sophisticated and popular taste; the effects upon the social appreciation of art of cheap reproductions of work, and even of the prevalence of faking.

But anthropology is not equipped to cover this whole field, much of which is a province of archaeologists, art historians, and orientologists, with some help from philosophers, psychologists and sociologists. While Romanesque sculpture and painting reveal an aesthetic vision and view of man and society analogous to much in African or Oceanian traditional art, an anthropologist lacks the scholarly apparatus that would enable him to comment pertinently on the human relations involved. Notable work on Indonesian theatre has been done by anthropologists such as James L. Peacock and Clifford Geertz, but by convention and training the province of the anthropologist is primarily the art of societies which appear exotic to the civilizations of the West and the Orient, the societies of small-scale, simple technology and unfamiliar structure.

In its preoccupation with the exotic, the anthropology of art is one of the most attractive and yet one of the most difficult aspects of the discipline. It is attractive because of the spectacular variety of the ethnographic material, variety of the non-naturalistic character of the art helped to open up the whole problem of representation, but the artists who appreciated this did not need anthropologists to make the point. What workers in other disciplines – and to a lesser extent, the general public have sought from anthropologists are insights into the utilitarian and symbolic meaning of forms which would otherwise appear weird, distorted, ludicrous, threatening or simply banal. But this task has been difficult for a number of reasons, among them the lack of agreed principles for analysing exotic art, the uneasy relationship with aesthetics, and the temptation to substitute descriptive cultural statement of the unfamiliar for rigorous analysis of theoretical problems.

In the last resort the anthropologist's role is not to generate information about art but to transmit it. Even if he is a member of the community whose art is being presented, it is not his personal view that is called for but a summation of community belief, opinion and action. Thus, the answer to the underlying question as to how far an anthropologist is to be trusted as interpreter or translator of the art is: in an alien culture must be imperfect and to some extent speculative. In philosophical anthropology, the arguments for and against the possibility of an anthropologist "understanding" the concepts of an actor in an alien society are now well worn. In the field of art an anthropologist operates as in other fields – only by way of incremental understanding. He can never claim that his understanding is complete, although an anthropologist who belongs to the society under study can naturally speak within his experience. But what anthropologists have increasingly done in the field of art is to work side by side with the artists – as Anthony Forge has done with Abenaki and Balinese artists, and Warren d'Azevedo with Liberian mask-makers. A glance at an anthology compiled by Carol Jopling on art and aesthetics in primitive societies, or at sets of papers on tribal or primitive art edited by Marijn Smith or Anthony Forge, will show how skilfully and sensitively many anthropologists have blended their firsthand knowledge of exotic cultures with their interest in art forms.

The *Anthropology of Art* is a good example of the rich body of information now available to those who wish to

deepen their knowledge of exotic art. It is not the result of field study but brings together in a lively and thought-provoking way many ideas about art from authorities such as Ernst Gombrich, Erwin Panofsky and Richard Wollheim, with a great deal of material, elaborately illustrated, from West Africa, aboriginal Australia, New Guinea, the north-west coast of America and the Alaskan and Canadian Eskimo. The title has to be read in a special sense: it is not the anthropology of art, but rather "An Anthropology of Traditional Plastic Exotic Art". Western and Oriental art is not dealt with nor (except for an odd reference to folk song in England) is the book concerned with music, drama or literature. Even within the "tribal" fields, an important modern sector of anthropological interest, the development of indigenous art under the impact of industrial economic and political pressures is excluded. No reference appears, for instance, to the early, rather sadistic study by Julius Lips, *The Savage Hills Back*, nor to the recent volume, stimulated by Nelson Graburn, on *Ethnic and tourist art*.

Within his chosen field, which he cogently argues should not be labelled "primitive" art, Layton sets out to examine the recent art of small-scale societies around the world, paying particular attention to any universal principles of artistic expression which they may demonstrate and to the diversity of "fashions" in which such principles have been put into effect. He identifies two main approaches to the study of art – that of aesthetic evaluation in terms of formal organization, and that of communication in terms of particularly apt use of images, especially symbols. This seems to be essentially a restatement of the familiar dichotomy of intellectual as against emotional appreciation. The author holds that aesthetics and imagery are alternative ways in which visual art reveals or creates order in the world, but in a puzzling conjunction he then adds style as another common way of achieving order in figurative art. Since he defines style by reference to the formal qualities of a work of art without reference to its meaning, this looks like a doubling of criteria of assessment, but from the side of the artist rather than of the observer. However this argument may go, the major sections of the book, on art and on style, are packed with suggestive generalizations about how meanings are attributed to design, how a tradition of design can be expressive and stimulative for social interaction, and how styles represent and structure the appearance of objects in ways relevant to social behaviour. Parallels between language and visual communication are also

explored. Throughout the book many telling data are presented on the role of artists in their society, their criteria of aesthetic evaluation, the economic, political and ritual setting of their art, the recruitment and rewards of artists, and the response of their public to the local art forms.

Curiously, from an anthropologist, the chapter on art and social life is the weakest in the book. A lengthy discussion of the contrast between uncivilized states and traditional kingdoms in West Africa is interesting enough, and is followed by informative case studies of Yoruba cult art and royal art in Benin. But the involved account of the anthropological setting is allowed to obscure the somewhat tendentious argument that the ideas which gain expression in the tangible art objects are philosophical reflections on the nature of political authority and its place in the world. By contrast the final chapter on creativity of the artist is a rousing demonstration of how, in traditional societies, talent and skill are recognized, innovation is assessed and change introduced. At times the injection of methodology seems rather forced. Dr Layton is at pains to point out that he rejects a method of comparison by simple similarity and difference: he avoids listing and comparing the functions of specific art objects (his italics), such as figures or masks, and instead follows Lévi-Strauss in examining the role of art objects "regardless of their surface morphology". He wants to see the ideas and values given expression in art objects not as reduced

to "a servile reflection of social interaction" but rather as agents of an ideology impacting upon the form of social relations. This, I think, is a modern way of looking at art, is Lévi-Strauss at some remove. And unfortunately, after this trenchant declaration, the author makes no reference to one of the most impressive contributions yet made by anthropology to the study of art – the two volumes of *La voie des masques* (1975) in which Lévi-Strauss demonstrates with delicate skill the relation of myth, ritual, technique and social context to two contrasted types of mask from the American north-west coast. In a series of transformations and antitheses, from colour to cosmology, the significance of the mask with protruding eye and rolling tongue is elucidated as a kind of mirror image of the mask with recessed eye and hollow mouth, each to be understood only in relation to the other type as a coded expression of basic ideas and values. Nothing in Layton's volume matches the elegance of that analysis.

But in sum the book offers a sparkling introduction to anyone wishing to understand something of the art of exotic societies and the contribution made by anthropology to the study of it. It discusses fundamental problems in the interpretation of art, and with ample illustration demonstrates the independence and creativity of the plastic art traditions of non-literate peoples. It shows very clearly how anthropology can enlarge the perimeter of our understanding of the place of the aesthetic in life.



"Good Afternoon #1", Alex Katz's oil painting of 1974 reproduced in *Contemporary American Realism* since 1960 by Frank H. Goodyear, Jr (250pp. Boston: New York Graphic Society. £20. 0 8212 1126 9), to be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

Performing Maroons

By Philip J. C. Dark

SALLY AND RICHARD PRICE:
Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest

237pp. University of California Press. £22.50.
0 520 04345 6

Political, economic, religious and social institutions have been the traditional focus of interest among anthropologists, whose enquiries into art have been limited. Those anthropologists who have enquired into art first tried to discover how particular aesthetic forms and designs evolved and then turned to the primitive and primitive peoples. Some have been attracted to the art of higher though still exotic civilizations, and others have sought to take a synthetic view, ethnic as well as aesthetic, and emphasizing the milieu, function and cultural context of the art in question.

A major impetus to this approach has come from ethnological museums, as they try to put their collections in order, and bring the full range of man's imaginative creations to public attention. Many exhibitions of indigenous artefacts are now extensively researched and their catalogues form authoritative monographs in the anthropology of art.

Sally and Richard Price are two American anthropologists who are authorities on the way of life and history of the Maroons, or Bush Negroes, of Suriname, and their *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* is the catalogue of an exhibition put on by the Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1980. The exhibition included 350 objects drawn from museums in Europe and the US, of which 292 are illustrated in this volume, which also includes photographs taken in the field by the Prices and other illustrations of historical interest.

The Maroons are descendants of African slaves who escaped from plantations between the seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries into the inhospitable interior of Suriname, where they doggedly resisted recapture and founded groups which became the forerunners of the six present-day tribes, numbering, in all, 46,500 people. The Prices describe the cultural background of their daily lives, and the many kinds of ritual which order their civilizational society. They go on to consider the nature and role of art in Maroon life – the aesthetic framework of personal adornment, wood-carving, the decoration of calabashes, the performing arts, as well as the aesthetic aspects of "the sounds, gestures and languages of daily life" seen as part of a "performance". All Maroon adults participate actively

in a wide range of artistic endeavours and enjoy the discussion and evaluation of artistic pursuits.

The Maroons are perhaps best known for their wood-carving, which is splendidly illustrated in this book. Up until the 1960s at least, every man was expected to produce the entire range of wooden objects necessary for himself, his wives and certain others, but, contrary to previous generalizations, we are told, "the very great majority of woodcarvers designs are neither named nor conceptualized as being meaningful". The Prices show how limited our view has been of the art of these people by recounting and illustrating their various artistic skills, not only as they are today but as they have changed through time.

The ethnic origins of the slaves brought from Africa to Suriname were very diverse, so that when they escaped into the bush they were faced with creating viable institutions out of a disparate social and religious knowledge and the slave culture they had been exposed to, but they shared "deep-level cultural principles" learnt in Africa. By the mid-eighteenth century they had put together a sustaining culture, whose inventiveness and dynamism led to new forms of artistic expression and to the art of the Maroons of today. The Prices' book is an outstanding study in the relatively new field of "ethno-aesthetics".

Undiscovered country

By F. L. Carsten

BRUCE F. PAULEY:

Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis
A History of Austrian National Socialism
292pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 8078 1456 3

The past decades have seen an enormous outpouring of monographs and learned articles on the history of German National Socialism; but less has been written on its Austrian counterpart even though the Austrian party was older and there were very close links between the two. The reason probably is that the German party ruled for twelve years and involved the world in a catastrophic war, while the Austrian party never gained power in its own right. Indeed, as early as 1926 it was made subordinate to the Nazi headquarters and thenceforth received its marching orders from Munich. Soon after, a German National Socialist, Theo Habicht, was appointed Inspector-General of the Austrian party, with far-reaching powers of interference and control. The Austrian party lost its independence and never gained sweeping electoral successes. After the Anschluss, the top posts in occupied Austria were given to Germans from the Reich and many of the Austrian

Nazi leaders were removed to Germany.

Bruce F. Pauley, in his preface to *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis*, claims that to sustain the silence has been drawn across the history of Austrian National Socialism and that "the Nazis of Austria have virtually been forgotten". Yet his own bibliography lists some thirty items devoted to one or other aspect of their history. Several younger Austrian historians have published detailed evidence for the history of the Austrian Nazi party, its social composition and structure, its early activities, its attempt to seize power in July 1934, its internal rivalries and its relations with Germany. There has also been some recent literature in English, and Pauley himself has written previously on the subject. Indeed, the Austrian Nazis have probably received more attention from historians than many other Fascist movements, except only those of Italy and Germany.

The book gives a vast mass of detail, especially on the endless quarrels and the infighting among the party leaders. At times, there were at least four factions fighting for "power" within the party, and the factions were backed by different Nazi leaders in Germany. As to social composition, the party was particularly strong among students and the intelligentsia, among white-collar workers and lower-grade state officials and among the

unemployed. Its composition was thus very similar to that of the German party, except that the outset after the experience of the purge of June 1934 – but that the opposite applied to the leaders of the Austrian SS, who were strictly subordinate to Himmler. The picture is far from clear.

What is new in this book is an interpretation which makes out that the Austrian National Socialists, ardently desiring the Anschluss and deeply detesting the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime, were virtually misguided Austrian patriots. "With the renewal of German intervention into the affairs of the Austrian party the Alpine and Danubian Nazis realized to their dismay that not only Austria's independence was at stake, but their own as well." Says Pauley, "The Austrian Nazis feared the German invasion nearly as much as Schuschnigg and President Miklas." But the German invasion may also have been directed against the Austrian Nazis themselves whose "dangerous" autonomist tendencies would have been increased by a takeover of the government in Vienna. "No evidence is produced to substantiate these assertions. All that could be said is that – with the Austrian Nazis so deeply divided – some probably thought along such lines (for example, Dr Riehl, the party's first leader), but

certainly not all of them. It seems that the leaders of the Austrian SA favoured some autonomy – not surprisingly after the experience of the purge of June 1934 – but that the opposite applied to the leaders of the Austrian SS, who were strictly subordinate to Himmler. The picture is far from clear.

Curiously enough, in a book of such detail, no mention is made of the decisive conference at Passau in Bavaria in 1926 at which Hitler addressed the assembled Austrian Nazi leaders and succeeded in establishing his control over the Austrian party. He accused it of being "democratic", a party like so many others in which decisions were

taken by a majority vote, while his German party was opposed to any compromise or alliance with any other party. Just as the Italian Fascist party was, he insisted on a declaration of loyalty from those present, and the majority obliged. Yet a minority dissented and as a result the party split. For several years there were two National Socialist parties in Austria; but the "Hitler Movement" slowly gained the upper hand, and its rivals eventually became a small sect.

Unfortunately this book contains a number of surprising errors. Hitler was born at Braunau on the Inn (in the extreme west of Austria) and not in the Wildviertel. The first leader of the Austrian "Fatherland Front" was not Prince Starheimberg, but Chancellor Dollfuss (following the example of Germany where Hitler was the Chancellor as well as Leader of the Nazi Party). Bohemia and Moravia were not "predominantly German-speaking areas", not even in the late nineteenth century, but were to a very large extent Czech-speaking. And why was it necessary to spatter the whole volume by way of decoration with innumerable swastikas, preceding the opening page, the notes, the bibliography, and every chapter and subsection? Their continued repetition is surely gratuitous and unworthy of a book which is produced well and has hardly any printer's errors.

Getting together

By Walter Laqueur

PETER D. STACHURA:

The German Youth Movement 1900-1945
An Interpretative and Documentary History
246pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 27572 1

The German Youth Movement, although a mere footnote in the political history of Europe, is of considerable interest to the cultural historian as the first known instance of a "youth culture" that developed through its own initiative, rather than that of parents, teachers, older leaders, prophets or gurus. In its specific, historical form it never became a mass movement, remaining confined to Germany and Austria, and was suppressed when Hitler came to power. The youth cultures that emerged in various parts of the world after the Second World War owed nothing to this precursor; usually they were not even aware of its existence. During the past two decades some historians and sociologists have become interested in the phenomenon of youth revolt, partly, no doubt, as a result of the events of the 1960s. Whether, in consequence, a "sophisticated framework" has emerged, as Peter D. Stachura believes, of "generationally related concepts" such as the birth cohort, political socialization, and youth's crisis of identity is a moot point; these concepts teach us little, if anything, that was not known before. Nor is there much to be said for the hypothesis mentioned by the author that the unprecedented scale and rapidity of change set in motion by the Industrial Revolution made generational conflict inevitable. The countries in the forefront of the Industrial Revolution – Britain, and later the United States and Japan – in fact were least troubled by revolt.

Stachura fortunately does not waste much time discussing these recent but not too successful attempts to explain the youth movement in quasi-scientific terms. He is aware that it was a "highly complicated phenomenon" and that the explanation cannot be sought merely within the confines of a theory of generational antagonism. Hence the ritual incantation: "Only if the techniques of different disciplines of the political sciences are applied will the youth movement become comprehensible to a satisfactory extent." But the youth movement was not primarily political; and in any case Stachura, like some other historians, seems to

have an exaggerated notion of what the different disciplines of the political sciences can – and cannot – accomplish. On the other hand, he rightly makes the point in answer to various youth-movement purists, that one need not have been a member of the movement in order to write about it: the outsider may not have been able to experience the same emotional attachment, but he should none the less be able to view the movement fairly and soberly.

The *German Youth Movement* is a well-informed and sensible short survey of German youth organizations from the turn of the century, when the autonomous groups (the *Wandervogel*) first came into being, to the end of the Second World War. The author is familiar with all the primary and secondary sources, not to mention unpublished doctoral dissertations, and he has diligently combed the archives. For anyone unfamiliar with the subject, this is a competent and reliable introduction. At the same time it suffers from

several basic flaws. Although there are many – perhaps too many – dates and names in this book (which, as far as I can judge, are all correct), the real significance of the various groupings of the German youth movement is not to be found in such facts and figures: they were not political parties or trade unions, and strictly speaking had no history. To understand what was so peculiar about them one must know what they did, or tried to do – their meetings, summer and winter camps, expeditions, readings, songings, and so on. Of these activities the author tells us very little, and the reader who wants to know what it was like to belong to such a group will be little the wiser after perusing this volume; labels like "irrational" and "romantic" are only of limited help.

Again, it seems arbitrary, to say the least, and the history of the German youth movement is not in 1933, but in 1945. The autonomous, elitist *Bünde* of the pre-1914 period and the 1920s had little in common

with the Hitler Youth, the state organization to which everyone in a certain age group had to belong. The author himself says as much: "The year 1933 signifies a decisive dividing line in the history of the movement" whatever practices the Hitler youth movement purloined from its predecessors it distorted out of all recognition. Why, then, did he pursue his study beyond the dividing line? If, on the other hand, he believes that the history of German youth is a seamless web, he should have carried the narrative forward to the 1970s, for various youth organizations did exist in post-war Germany.

Stachura devotes some hundred pages to the pre-Hitler youth movement and some forty to the Hitler Youth, despite the fact that the story of the pre-1933 movement has already been told in considerable detail by a number of writers, including the present reviewer, to whose work Stachura makes gracious reference. It is difficult to see why he should have thought it necessary to go over

The eccentricity of being

By Daniel Johnson

HELMUTH PLESSNER:

Geometrische Schriften
Volume 1, 312pp. 3 518 06520 3
Volume 3, 395pp. 3 518 06524 6
Volume 4, 456pp. 3 518 06527 0
Volume 5, 284pp. 3 518 06529 7
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM36 each (paperback, DM28).

Helmuth Plessner is the last of a race of philosophical giants, which included Heidegger and Scheler, who were trained before 1914 by Husserl: it is appropriate that he has lived to see this edition of his works, planned to run to ten volumes, though it is by no means certain that he has said his last word yet, and the edition's calculations may still be upset.

The first volume contains two long essays: "The Scientific Idea" (1913), and "The Crisis of Transcendental Truth at its Beginning" (1918). The earlier work, astonishing for a twenty-one-year-old "student of medicine and zoology," is an investigation and justification of man's need to subordinate "and unify" reality. Though the idiom is Kantian or phenomenological, and Plessner, unlike Scheler, never studied idealism, there is something medieval about the assimilation of the senses from both ends

category of possibility, thus bringing value and activity into being to reconcile us with God, "the highest Whole". Medieval, too – but very German – is the theme of *Demut*, humility, as the sole virtue of the scholar. The essay of 1918 is a doctoral dissertation the fruit of four years with Husserl at Göttingen, the town to which Plessner returned after a long exile in Holland after 1933, and it assumes some knowledge of the *Logos* of literature. Plessner is more concerned to distinguish than to decide between philosophical schools; the central problem is still the possibility of synthetic judgment *a priori*, and a transcendental method distinct both from phenomenology and Kantian or other positivist a sketchy. All forms of vitalism, and "logocentric" which found political exegesis in the November revolution, are rejected, though much attention is paid to Nelson and his revival of Fries's visionary Kantianism.

Volume Three is devoted to Plessner's first major systematic work: *The Unity of the Senses: Foundations of an Aesthetics of the Mind* (1923), and to the recent *Anthropology of the Senses* (1970). Even if these were not both remarkable works, the comparison of styles separated by a half-century – clear and sparkling in both cases – would justify their study. In pursuing a critique of the senses from both ends

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clear his system, but Plessner makes clear his stand against Existentialism: man experiences himself as an eccentric being with no ontological precedents over other beings. Rather than the elevation of man above the zoological, he hypothesizes the zoological in a running argument with his first teacher, Driesch, Konrad Lorenz, and the baronial biologist of the Baltic, Uexküll. Yet he avoids the Scylla of scientism and the Charybdis of vitalism; nor do the *terribles simplifications* of *Lebensphilosophie* escape his rigour – not even Dilthey, whose importance for Plessner had clearly grown, along with that of Köhler's Gestalt psychology. It is the structure, not the genesis, of the "double aspect" of being (extension/introspection) which Plessner's concept of "positionality" is intended to interpret. This grandly architectonic work culminates with the three anthropological laws of natural artificiality, of mediated immediacy (language), and of the utopian vantage-point – which brings him to the threshold of politics. In Volume Five are collected four substantial applications of Plessner's anthropology to human conflict, beginning with his critique of idealism in *Limit of Community* (1924), followed by the remarkable *Power and Human Nature* (1931) – with its passionate protestation of man's "unfathomability" even in the face of scientific manipulation – and two later essays on war and on the emancipation of power.

Digging in along the Danube

By J. J. Wilkes

A. LENGVEL and G. T. B. RADAN
(Editors)

The Archaeology of Roman Pannonia
50pp. Lexington: University Press
of Kentucky / Budapest: Akadémiai
Kiadó. \$45.
0 8131 1370 9

Although the title specifies Roman Pannonia, the 500 pages of text and 167 pages of illustrations describe the history and archaeology of what is now the west half of Hungary from palaeolithic to medieval times. The province of the Roman Empire once comprised the lands between Vienna and Belgrade, defined on the north and east by the great bend of the river Danube above Budapest. For the Magyars, looking towards the Roman Empire from the outside, this former Roman territory is still today called Transdanubia.

The prehistory is described by Otto Trogmayer. Inevitably we are introduced to the bewildering catalogue of "cultures" and "groups" to which are assigned names either of the site where one was first clearly identified or of some physical characteristic apparently of diagnostic significance. The material evidence from prehistoric times is compared with that from other lands, plentiful and was studied in that classic of archaeological scholarship, V. Gordon Childe's *The Danube in Prehistory* (1929). Notions of innovation through the movement of new peoples into the area which that work enshrined are now disputed, though they still abound in the work under review. Yet even in a chapter which surveys and cites only the most recent publications it is still extraordinary that neither Childe nor his work is referred to (though it is noted in the introduction).

A survey of Pannonian archaeology by Agnes Salamon and Agnes Cs. 506) from the end of the Roman province in the fifth century to the arrival of the Magyars in the tenth century is a different problem. Here the task is to identify and match the material remains (which consist almost entirely of burials) to those known peoples who successively moved into and out of the area during those five centuries: Hungarians, Ostrogoths, Longobards, Avars, Franks and Slavs. Some indication of the problem here is to be gained from an Appendix (by Imre Lengyel) describing the results obtained from laboratory analysis of blood types in skeletons of this period. This results from a disturbing lack of homogeneity and seem to indicate that the bulk of persons interred were of local origin. Moreover it appears that remains in these and other cemeteries "reticently" represent a continuously resident aboriginal population which can be followed in our material from the sixth to the thirteenth centuries despite the diverse ethnic elements that were swept hither by the storms of history.

The Roman remains are described in seventeen chapters contributed by seven Hungarian scholars still very active in their fields: Ferenc Rácz (History of Research), Sándor Soproni (Geography), Róza, Roman Brodsky (Roman Province), János Rácz (Administration) and the Army, Population, Way of Life, Economy, Life), Edit B. Thomas (Religion, Villas, Arts and Crafts, Glassware, Amateurs), Klára Pócsy (Cities), Katalin Bódy-Székely (Cemeteries), Eva B. Bónis (Pottery). As one would expect from such authors it is all sound, stuff and some of it is really quite interesting. It is all the more a pity that such an excellent production is marred by the poor quality of the English, which abounds in misspellings and confusing transcriptions of names and technical terms (and this applies not least to the plate captions, see plate CXXIX).

Moreover, in spite of the plea on the back cover that the book is "not a history", it is a pity that it is not a history. The book is a survey, but it is a survey that, taken together in a single volume, has the quality of a series of separate surveys.

evidently produced independently and at different times, do not present the reader with such repetition and overlap as to cause both tedium and embarrassment. As an attempt to provide an ordered introduction to the material remains from a historically documented era it has many shortcomings. The provision of maps and site plans is throughout wholly inadequate and among the illustrations the same objects appear in some cases three times, viewed from different directions. The rich and varied stone sculpture and epigraphy of Roman Hungary is hardly represented at all.

Throughout its history Pannonia was a frontier province, and a particularly exposed one at that. By around the end of the first century AD a Roman army of four legions, which together with auxiliary forces totalled around 40,000 full-time professional soldiers, was deployed near the Danube. There grew up around the garrisons large civil communities at places where modern towns now exist: both Vienna and Budapest have their origins in the combination of legionary fortress and the nearby civil town. Before that happened, in the century following the Roman conquest under Augustus, what was Roman Pannonia came with soldiers and settlers from outside. Modern Ljubljana began as a colony of discharged legionary veterans, settled around AD 14 after the legion based there had been removed to the Danube, where it occupied a new base at Carnuntum. Both Emona (the Roman Ljubljana) and Carnuntum lay on that ancient route between the Adriatic and the Baltic along which amber had been conveyed to the Mediterranean as early as the Bronze Age. Other veteran colonies were placed along the route that passed from northern Italy down the Save valley to Belgrade and the Balkans. From its first conquest under Augustus this overland route between the east and west halves of the Empire was of great strategic importance. In the late Roman period it was the axis along which the civil war between imperial rivals more often than not took place. When it was finally severed, at the end of the fourth century, it never again proved possible to unite the Empire.

Romanization, a crude label for a complex process which saw the conquering barbarian turn into a councillor, toga-clad and Latin-speaking; of a Roman provincial city, was much advanced under Hadrian, that tireless imperial inspector of provinces and armies. Several communities in the interior were incorporated as Roman cities (*Municipia*) and the same order was applied to the hitherto largely unregulated frontier towns near the military bases. At the same time the widespread adoption of techniques introduced first by the Roman conquerors, notably stone-masonry, reveal the persistence of native traditions in burial rite, dress and ornament, and personal names. It is a pity that the illustrations of the present volume do not include one of the superb late first-century tombstones of the Bravici. In north-east Pannonia, described in the text, in a panel below the portraits of the deceased is depicted the journey to the world beyond in a two- or four-wheeled coach. There is a coachman, behind on a bench sits a servant and the whole procession is conducted by a leader. All this, and much else, was profoundly affected by events in the late second century which were to bring Pannonia and its army to the centre of imperial affairs.

In the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161) a leading Greek orator delivered fulsome tribute to Rome and her Empire. The preserved text has since attracted many to portray that golden era as the golden high summer of Rome. It praises the emperors for their protection of civilized Greece and Rome, a benign embrace in which all could flourish in peace and prosperity and from destructive wars within and without; enemies outside by gifts of armies and frontiers. No one even remembered that a war was like one had to make a long journey in

any direction to gain a sight of the emperor's armies. It is perhaps tempting to imagine that some of those outside the Empire may have heard of the speech by Aelius Aristides and thought about a move to this paradise from their bleak homelands. Under Pius' successor Marcus Aurelius some of the Germans beyond the Danube asked if they could enter and, when this was refused, entered none the less, sweeping aside the frontier army of Pannonia and penetrating to northern Italy.

In the century and a half which had elapsed since they had fought the legions of Caesar and Augustus the Germans along the Rhine and Danube had got used to the ways of Rome: some of their rulers were Roman appointees, native princes brought up in the Empire. Goods were exchanged and for some there was even the opportunity for service in the Roman army, by then recruited almost entirely from the frontier districts. After a decade of fighting the Germans were forced back to their homelands in what is now Czechoslovakia and some sort of order was restored along the Roman frontier. The victories of the Pannonian army, and those of other Danube armies, were depicted in the spiral frieze around a column still to be seen in Rome (the Column of Marcus Aurelius in the Piazza della Colonna).

Barely a decade later, those same legions marched from Pannonia to Rome to bring the Empire for their general, Septimius Severus. Their barbarian appearance and uncouth

speech terrified the inhabitants of the capital. Even worse, the new emperor promptly dismissed the Italian praetorian guard and replaced it with men from the Danube legions: thirty years later pitched battles between them and the townspeople were still occurring. Severus' victory brought Pannonia, or rather its army and dependent communities, a period of material well-being which lasted more or less until the military disasters of the third century AD. Inscriptions record the erection and embellishment of many buildings and other amenities; and there are many expressions of loyalty to the Severan emperors, reflecting the special relationship of the Pannonians with the dynasty.

In the transformation of the ruling hierarchy brought about by the near disintegration of the Empire in the third century, most of the "soldier emperors" who led the recovery rose through the ranks from humble origins in Pannonia or neighbouring Moesia Superior. Most of these were tough soldiers and conscientious administrators and, later on, pious Christians. It may be suggested that their rule, so utterly different from that of the cultivated ruling class of the early Empire, paid more attention to the condition of the humbler classes where their origins lay. This "Pannonian identity" is best seen in the rule of Valentinian I (364-375), a Pannonian army officer elected Augustus at the age of forty-three. An earnest Christian, he worked hard for the well-being of the Empire. The son of an illiterate peasant, he had a violent temper and a brutal

nature. Above all, records a historian, "he hated the well-dressed and educated, the wealthy and well-born".

In producing this digest of much recent study of this important province of the Roman Empire, mostly published only in Hungarian or not yet published at all, the editors and publishers have done well. Though in quality and level of scholarship it cannot stand comparison with Andras Mócsy's *Pannonia and Upper Moesia* (1974), this new collection supplements that masterly synthesis on many points. It is, however, to be regretted that in their introduction to the volume (which has too many misprints and simple errors of fact) the editors proclaim in a jarring manner the great value of their volume. Now, it is asserted, the archaeological evidence is set in its proper place over and against the "historical and analytical" approach adopted by such scholars as Mócsy. This sort of notion is foolish in sense and does no credit to the achievement of Hungarian scholars, using both literary and material evidence, who have increased our knowledge of Roman Pannonia, in all its aspects, since the Second World War. Happily, the reader will soon discover that these and other editorial notions are negated in this volume. In conclusion, it must be said that this book does not justify the editors' claim that "for the student of the Roman provinces ... this book is a *conditio sine qua non*". A new, revised and corrected edition might be.

Approaching the Absolute

By Mary Beard

JOSCELYN GODWIN
Mystery Religions in the Ancient World
176pp. Thames and Hudson. £10.
0 500 11019 0

Fifty (or perhaps even twenty) years ago it was reassuringly easy to grasp the broad outlines of Roman religious history. The story ran something like this. The traditional cult of the city had once been the object of unwavering devotion from an unsophisticated, yet pious, population; but by the second century BC this state religion had declined into an empty ritualism, which provided no outlet for religious emotions and no focus for "belief". A gaping void was evident in the spiritual life of Rome, into which rushed satisfaction from the East: the familiar "lux ex oriente". So, for several hundred years a variety of alternatives was on offer - Orphism, Mithraism, the worship of Cybele and Attis, Christianity - until at last one of these came out on top, either because of a series of historical accidents, or, if one liked, because it was True.

This framework was not without its uses. In particular, it fostered pioneering work on the archaeological remains of these "mystery cults" and careful study of their spread over the whole Roman Empire. Nor did it exclude all controversy - for example, on the precise debt of Christianity to its competitors. However, as a straightforward linear story it now appears to be seriously misleading. In the first place, discerning the moderating criterion of "deeply held personal commitment" as the touchstone of a successful religious system, we can approach the traditional state cult of old Greece and Rome much more positively. In fact, on a broadly structuralist model, those supposedly "empty rituals" are now seen to have offered a way of understanding the workings of the world, and of defining the position of a man within it. It follows, then, that the so-called "mystery religions" did not simply rush into a vacant theological space, but

provided alternative ways of constructing and comprehending "reality". It is the nature of these alternatives and their means of expression within ritual and symbolism that have formed the most interesting areas of modern research.

So, in a period when historical explanations of the Mysteries are becoming rapidly more sophisticated, the reviewer of a book entitled *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (actually, almost exclusively, the Roman Empire) might naturally be expected to site the new work as precisely as possible within current debates. Here, however, that would be a meaningless operation. Joscelyn Godwin has produced a book not of history, but of theology. Ancient religion has been rescued from the hands of "unbelieving academics" and "Christian chauvinists" and the Mysteries are seen to play their part in the "Perennial Philosophy", as "attempts, each valid for its time and place, to point the way to the true goal of human existence". Christ, Mithras, Cybele, Attis, Isis, Serapis, Dionysus, Orpheus and the rest lead their adherents (ancient or modern) down well-trodden spiritual paths and ultimately to a common conception of the Absolute.

Perhaps there is something of interest here. I am hardly competent to judge a work of mysticism, but, as such, this book is, I suspect, quite pat for the course. Moreover, the recurring and shifting notion of the "Perennial Philosophy", from its first appearance in sixteenth-century Italy, through Leibniz, Huxley and beyond, is certainly worth attention; as is, also, maybe, the intellectual make-up of Godwin himself, whose roots in the Renaissance tradition are revealed by his earlier studies of Robert Fludd and "Athanasius Kirke". Still, the "Perennial" (believing or not) deserves a warning.

Leaving aside some errors of fact (Julius Caesar treated as the first Roman emperor; Plato imagined as who was "the writer himself"), it is, to say the least, unsettling to find the religious history of the ancient world cast in terms of a crisis. On the one hand stand the heroes, those whose religions contain the true vital ingredients; a conception of the

Absolute, a Mother Goddess and hopes for an afterlife; on the other, the villains of the established churches, "solenn but unmythical", "respectable yet undemanding of personal enthusiasm or spiritual effort". It is not hard to guess the identity of these arch-enemies: Numismatists, the founder of Roman state religion and (unusually for this book) firmly designated "legendary"; official Christianity in the form of St Peter rejecting the Gentiles and bishops torturing Arians; syncretism, which was "never more than a convenience" and so, after a bizarre comparison with the indiscriminating quality of modern democracy, is written off for making "no attempt at a real discerning of spirits". The heroes are equally predictable: Christ, in his esoteric forms; Pythagoreans and Platonists, who "learned the answers not through reasoning alone, but through initiation into the Mysteries"; Dionysus, whose rituals "opened the windows of the super-sensible world" - when they didn't just teach the "facts of life"; Mithras, with some reservations - for here Godwin suspects "that the whole affair may have been an invented religion rather than a revealed one". It is an entertaining story, but hardly compatible with the ancient evidence.

Obviously concerned with contemporary relevance, Godwin is eager to emphasize comparisons with the modern world. This is also a cause for alarm. If the analogies sometimes made - just recently unhelpful (what does the familiar juxtaposition of Mithraism and Freemasonry actually tell us?), they are occasionally positively misleading. Vespaian's stay in the temple of Isis is simply not comparable to "General Eisenhower making a retreat with the devotees of Krishna" and the suggestion that modern transsexuals are in fact reincarnations of the self-castrated followers of Cybele and Attis (even allowing the possibility) indicates an extraordinary view of both groups.

One must concede that the publishers nowhere claim that this book is a work of ancient history. However, giving no doubt to its title and general appearance, it is already to be found on the Classics shelves of academic bookshops and libraries. This is not where it belongs.

Communal constraints

By D. C. Coleman

DOUGLAS C. NORTH:
Structure and Change in Economic History
228pp. W. W. Norton. \$19.95.
0 393 01478 9

Economic historians come in roughly two varieties. There are those who believe their subject to be a social science, mainly a branch of economics, and needing a plentiful supply of theory. And there are those who think it is probably a part of history, and getting along with their job without bothering much about the theoretical bases of what they are doing. American economic historians fall predominantly into the former category, most of their British counterparts into the latter.

There can be no question about the position of Douglas North, who is Professor of Economics at the University of Washington and a distinguished authority on American economic history. To him the task of the economic historian is to "explain the structure and performance of economies through time". He contends that economic historians have failed to do this properly because of the absence of a theory of institutional change, and the stated purpose of his latest book is to provide the elements of such a theory. He is no newcomer to this quest; indeed, for the past dozen or more years, singly or in co-operation with others, he has published a number of books and articles on this theme. In 1973 there appeared *The Rise of the West*

ern World, no less. This offered just such a theoretical framework for Western Europe from 900 to 1700. The latest instalment has no such spatial limits or cramping chronology. *Structure and Change in Economic History* runs from Neolithic Man to Microchip Man.

Part I of the book sets out the theory. In broad outline and in the author's chosen language it goes something like this. The neo-classical economic model of marginal utility maximization provides the best starting-point for an explanation of economic behaviour. But this model has a number of important defects. For example, it assumes that adjustment is frictionless (zero transaction costs and costlessly enforced property rights) and that private and social rates of return are equal. Moreover, it takes no account of the "free-rider problem", i.e. that some individuals do not act in accordance with the calculated self-interest which the model requires, but wait until group action secures a desired adjustment, and then receive the benefits. So something else is needed to give the neo-classical model greater relevance to observed behaviour.

The theory of institutional change which is to remedy this defect embraces the state, property rights, transaction costs, and ideology. The state specifies and enforces property rights only to the extent that they are consistent with the wealth-maximizing objectives of the ruler. So the state is essential for economic growth but it is also a source of economic instability. The fundamental institution of many economies, past and present, is the market; but participation in the market

involves transaction costs - measurement, information, compliance procedures, and the like. These can be lowered by the state, which defines and enforces the rules of the game, and may, for instance, permit the firm to function as a resource allocator. Thus economic organization is accounted for analytically by a theory of the state and a theory of transaction costs. But the "free-rider" dilemma remains and that cannot be explained without an explicit theory of ideology. Individuals sustain or change their ideological perspective or "world-view" according to its consistency or inconsistency with their experience. For example, an alteration in property rights giving rise to a sense of injustice may lead to a shift of ideology. Consequently ideology affects both decision-making within the market system and non-market resource allocation.

Part II provides an "explanation sketch" of world history, with the North theory applied to the basic economic juxtaposition of population and resources. "The First Economic Revolution" occurred some 10,000 years ago, when the development of settled agriculture in lieu of hunting and gathering replaced common property rights by exclusive property rights. The latter, by rewarding the owners, provided a direct incentive to improve efficiency and to acquire more knowledge. This explains the rapid progress made by mankind thereafter. There follows a quick rundown of ancient Egypt, the Persian, Greek and Roman empires; the rise and decline of feudalism and the expansion of early modern Europe; the Industrial Revolution, America between 1789 and 1914, and the arrival of "The Second Economic Revolution". This brought the wed-

dling of science and technology; gave birth to automated machinery; new sources of energy and the fundamental transformation of matter; created "an elastic supply curve of new knowledge which built economic growth into the system"; and thereby made the underlying assumptions of neo-classical economics realizable.

The book ends with Part III, a brief chapter resoundingly entitled "A Theory of Institutional Change and the Economic History of the Western World". This defines institutions as "a set of rules, compliance procedures, and moral and ethical behavioural norms designed to constrain the behaviour of individuals in the interests of maximizing the wealth or utility of principals" and ends by expressing the hope that "economic history conceived as a theory of the evolution of constraints should not only explain past economic performance but also provide the modern social scientist with the evolving contextual framework within which to explain the current performance of political-economic systems".

Dividing and ruling

By John Lerner

SAMUEL KLINE COHN, JR.
The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence
311pp. Academic Press. \$55.
0 12 179180 7

The *Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* treats of that one-third to a half of the population of Florence whose labour made the city a leading manufacturing centre in the Renaissance period. Primarily directed to fellow specialists and with only a marginal interest in high culture, employing models and techniques derived from nineteenth and twentieth-century labour history, it is a work which comes much closer to the spirit of Eugene Genovese than that of Jacob Burckhardt.

Its thesis can be summarized briefly. In Florentine history the years 1343-1383 were a time of intense social disturbance in which the *popolo minuto*, the artisans and labourers of the city, frequently broke out in violent protests against their conditions of life. This era culminated in 1380 when the *popolo minuto* (as some historians have it) the *imbricco* (or the *Marxists* and Samuel Kline Cohn prefer "the oppressed workers' insurrection" of the Ciompi revolt). Moving on, however, to the period 1450-1530, we find an apparently peaceful coexistence of lower and upper classes. The author asks here what structures and relationships among patricians and workers conditioned the character of each period. His answer is that in the fourteenth century the workers faced a "medieval" state, one with conflicting imperial jurisdictions where city-politicians depended upon local parish communities. In this period they established social networks extending beyond their own parishes to the whole city and were thus able to form a collective view of their role within it and take collective action in attempts to remedy their grievances.

By contrast, in the fifteenth century, largely as a result of, and in reaction to, the Ciompi revolt, the state, strengthened by the ideology of such "civic humanists" as Leonardo Bruni, had taken on a new power and had come to control a newly centralized police and court system which, though now indifferent to crimes committed by workers against workers, was able to punish effectively any lower-class assault upon superiors. At the same time the governing class, previously associated closely with their own neighbourhoods, came to form city-wide alliances and to see themselves above all as "citizens of Florence", united against threats from below.

Whether the conclusion follows directly from the initial premises may perhaps be questioned. But there can be no question that the expressed hope embodies the superhuman optimism needed to believe all this. Faith, indeed, is crucial, for the theory is never subjected to serious testing - if it ever can be. Instead the reader is often simply told that certain things happened because of different sorts of property rights, changes in transaction costs or varying ideological convictions. The evidence offered in Part II to suppose these particular interpretations is usually minimal or non-existent or sometimes simply wrong. At other times it is hard to suppress the nasty feeling that there is a good deal of familiar stuff here dressed up in special words; the "theory of ideology" is notably scintillating. But it is all full of ingenuity, excited admiration for its sweep and verve, has the same genuine insights which were already evident in North's earlier publications (property rights do matter), and could certainly not be described as other than thought-provoking.

Viability of the Vikings

By Hilda Davidson

BRUCE E. GELSINGER:
Icelandic Enterprise: Commerce and Economy in the Middle Ages
299pp. University of South Carolina Press.
0 87249 405 5

In the ninth century some thousands of men and women, mainly from Norway but some from elsewhere in Scandinavia or from northern Britain, set out to make new homes for themselves in Iceland. Their courage and determination in settling in a remote and desolate island has caught the imagination of many readers of the Icelandic sagas. From the beginning, Icelanders have gloried in their achievement, their law system and the Commonwealth which endured until 1264, and left much written evidence about their early history. This contrasts sharply with the poverty of early written records in the rest of Scandinavia, and some of the finest of the "family" sagas are virtually historical novels dealing with the early period of the settlement. It is natural to ask how the Icelanders achieved so much in an apparently unpromising and barren land, reached by a long voyage over dangerous seas.

Certainly the climate was more favourable than it became later, but storms, blizzards, long winter darkness and volcanic eruptions have always been the Icelandic lot, and the central region of the island is a lava desert. Increasing interest in the Viking Age, and excavations of market towns elsewhere in Scandinavia, as well as in Dublin and York, have increased our knowledge and curiosity about the economy which formed the backbone of Viking life. This book claims to deal with the "unusual and remarkable qualities of the Icelandic Commonwealth's foreign trade", and the author comments on the lack of any comprehensive treatment of the subject. He discusses how far the Icelanders could provide for themselves, and what they had to offer other countries, which was, basically, large amounts of cheap woollen cloth, sulphur (unobtainable elsewhere in the North) and luxury goods such as furs and falcons.

He reviews what is known of taxes on merchants and commercial practices in general, weights and measures used in trading, and trade relations with Norway and other Scandinavian lands, with the Icelandic colony of Greenland and the islands of the North Atlantic. He outlines the sad story of deterioration which caused near-starvation in Iceland in the thirteenth century and resulted in a final decision by the king of Norway to send foreign trade up to the end of the Middle Ages, when dried fish became Iceland's chief export, inspiring a fifteenth-century poet to sum up the situation: "Of Ysland to wryte is lytili nede, Save of Stokkfishi".

This is a useful book which will be welcomed by those who want definite information about values of goods, taxes imposed by the Norwegian kings, Icelandic shipping and the like. But it hardly lives up to the claims made for it. Much of the material on the Commonwealth has already appeared in the excellent work *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth* by Jon Jóhannesson, published in English by the University of Manitoba in 1974. Information, for instance, on the smelting of iron and methods of navigation used by early Scandinavian seamen is more clearly and ably presented there. In spite of claims that Bruce Gelsinger has used recent archaeological evidence, there is little of this, except a brief account of the merchant ships recovered from Roskilde Fjord. Evidence from the excavation of farms in Iceland and Greenland, as presented by Jóhannesson, Knud Krogh and others, has not been utilized. A detailed study of the economy of the sagas, however, by Bradfield Peckham in the journal *Peasant Studies* of 1976, and the detailed biography there given, has gone unnoticed.

While remarks about the critical use of saga evidence in the introduction are sensible enough, undue weight is put more than once on references to statements in the sagas without considering their context. For instance, the brilliant tale of the handings at an Icelandic farm in *Eyrbyggja Saga* begins with a witty account of the arrival of Thorgrunn, a mysterious woman from the Hebrides, with a splendid set of bed-clothes, including a silken quilt and English linen sheets. It is fair enough to take this as illustration of the

value set on such goods in Iceland, so that the greedy, spoilt Thorgrunn at once rushes down to the ship and tries to persuade Thorgrunn to sell them. But it hardly justifies solemn speculation as to whether the owner of the vessel came from Ireland, the Hebrides or Scandinavia, the assumption that the silk and coloured cloth reached the Hebrides through Ireland, and the noting of this as a rare example of an Irish trading ship reaching Iceland. This particular tale is a superb piece of fiction, partly based on traditional rules for disposing of the dead and the bed-clothes on which they died, and can hardly be put on a level with annals or cargo-lists. There is even a further reference to gifts said to be given to Thorgrunn by Leif in another saga, which she seems to have in her possession when she dies. This is evidence for some link between the sagas, but hardly justifies Gelsinger's assumption that "Leif had loaded his ship with similar goods to trade in Norway". Nor can a reference to an Icelandic bringing back a sword called Mail-Biter from Constantinople warrant the assumption that he may have been able to earn enough from trade to purchase it and brought back other swords to Iceland to sell at a profit.

The sagas were carefully analysed by early German scholars who believed implicitly in their reliability as historical documents, and they collected all possible references to trade. The evidence they produced might have been used more profitably here, for instance to solve the problem of what kind of men obtained ships to trade abroad, which is raised in the course of the book but not satisfactorily solved. Or to tackle another interesting question: when such huge quantities of woven cloth were produced in Iceland; how was this weaving organized? All readers of the sagas remember Gudrun's words to her husband, returned from killing his loved foster-son at her prompting: "I have spun yarn for twelve ells of homespun, and you have killed Kjaran". There is no attempt in this book to discuss what part was played by the women in providing Iceland's chief export, which assured the survival of the Commonwealth for so long. It seems that the last word has by no means been said here concerning the commerce and economy of Iceland.

Doing the groundwork

By John Coventry

GERALD O'COLLINS:

Fundamental Theology
283pp. Darton, Longman and Todd,
£5.99.
0 232 51522 0

Fundamental theology examines the ground on which the systematic theologian stands, delimits the nature of his enterprise, the tools he uses, the criteria he should apply. Dr Gerald O'Collins has in the past written a number of less substantial books on such subjects as revelation, dogma, teaching authority. It is of great value to have from him a more comprehensive, deeper and more thorough work on a subject he has long studied.

Fundamental Theology is felicitously written and produced at a very modest price. It is intended primarily for Roman Catholic theological students, and therefore relates principally to Vatican II and to earlier landmarks common to Catholics, while showing constant awareness of other Christian traditions, authors and insights. The various pieces of the jigsaw (revelation, faith, doctrine, philosophy, scripture, inspiration, tradition, etc.) are carefully analysed and fitted together, and the whole is set out in orderly chapters, sections and sub-sections. The coherence of the book rests on the general analysis of experience with which it starts. One may disagree here and there, but at the same time recognize the great value of such a well-organized and inclusive study.

One may disagree here and there. Perhaps because he is teaching at the Gregorian University, Fr O'Collins, SJ, tries to preserve as far as he can traditional elements which have long outlived any usefulness they may once have had. When Vincent of Lerins has been put to death by a thousand qualifications, one longs to read that he was a silly old true-blue reactionary whose famous canon "Catholic truth is that which has

been believed everywhere, always and by everyone" meant that he did not want any new ideas at any price.

Again, O'Collins sticks closely to the idea that "biblical inspiration is the God-given impulse to write the work of God" when this idea does not fully cohere with his own principles and proves redundant: there is no revelation without faith; it would be meaningless to talk of a God-inspired prophet to whom no one then or later paid any attention; a biblical writer speaks for and to a community, and the community's response is an integral part of "inspiration", the work of the Spirit in guiding verbal expression. In Matthew's case at least, the Gospel is more the product of a community, progressively shaping material for instruction and preaching in their own concrete situation, than of any author in the modern sense. Again, O'Collins clings to a too hard and fast distinction between foundational and dependent revelation which he has used in earlier writings: revelation in the apostolic age, which closed definitively, and the subsequent process of Christian revelation depending on it. The distinction is useful in broad general terms for understanding how revelation works, but not as applied to the New Testament. "The apostolic age" is far too loose a concept; much of the New Testament reflects the Christian thinking and interaction of those who had not known Jesus in his life on earth, and which developed after the death of any who had known him: is this layer foundational or dependent? One shades off into the other. Again, in his treatment of "acts of God" the author does not adequately make out the case that anything happens beyond the more heightened and perceptive awareness of the human being affected: ie, God acts upon or reacts with man's spirit.

More radical grounds for criticism are to be found in the chapter "Christ and Non-Christians". Take the following: "Through his incarnation Christ moved into an historical solidarity with all human beings, as well as with the created world. He entered history to become everyone and the focus of the universe."

Entail some abatement of technicalities on both sides. Gibson avoids the first danger more successfully than the second. Despite his assertion that "the book does not presuppose knowledge of formal logic", both its philosophical and its biblical components are engaged in close technical discussion with other scholars, and thus impose considerable demands on any reader who lacks the author's own unusual combination of interests and qualifications. His criticism of J. J. M. Roberts is a particularly opaque example, but not an isolated one.

Errors of detail are few and often insignificant. "Intuition" (p 13) "exaggerated" (p 29) and "crystalline" (p 207) are not in his dictionary, and the name of C. R. Taber is consistently spelt as if he were a mountain. J. A. T. Robinson's *Reclaiming the New Testament* is concerned with the dates of New Testament books, not manuscripts; a criticism of another book by J. A. T. Robinson rests partly on a misquotation.

The author's argument is nevertheless timely, useful, and generally persuasive. Careful logical analysis can indeed lead to better theological formulations, and even to better translations of biblical texts. Of particular importance are Gibson's exploration of the distinction between sense and reference; his handling of the slippery question of intention; his treatment of the surprisingly complex matter of proper names, including which and his joyful pursuit of the root fallacy. He is perhaps at his best in detailed discussion, for example of Old Testament synonyms and the language of covenant. At the end of the day, we do not know much more than we already knew from Barr: at least we know more clearly why we know it, and that it is in the good.

Hereafter to know God through other men and women and through the world would be to know God through the incarnate Christ." To speak of Christ becoming man is surely an egregious slip. Echoes of platonism in modern jargon do not actually explain anything at all if the God whom all men encounter in their human experience is in fact a Trinitarian God, and if the Word of Wisdom of God became man in Jesus at a particular point of history. The age-old problem of soteriology about Christ being the saviour of all men remain, and are not answered by vague phrases or metaphors. If, for instance, all men do not meet, or encounter, or somehow experience Christ in their lives, then Christ is not the saviour of all men, but only God is, who became incarnate in Christ and was so revealed to some men. And even for these, Christ is not their saviour if he is not

experienced by them. How can you love a person you do not meet (experience)? And yet O'Collins's own basis and treatment demand that he should make the experience of Christ central to his pattern. There are hints, but they are not followed up. If they had been, the whole jigsaw would have been shaken and would have fitted together differently. The author analyses fully the dynamics of knowing-hoping-loving in the context of personal relation to Christ, but never explains how I can have a personal relation to Christ; how it differs from a commitment to a person I simply know about; how different is awareness of the God who long ago communicated himself in Christ from here-and-now awareness of the Christ in whom God communicates himself.

O'Collins admits that there are some areas of fundamental theology

which he has not treated. He accepts the "high" or inflated New Testament views of Christ as a datum of theology; it is surely part of the task of fundamental theology to justify them - admittedly a very taxing task. He does not treat in any depth detail the serious question how and in what sense the Old Testament can be a vehicle of revelation for a Christian. He does not face the question (put by Christopher Evans) whether the whole idea of "holiness" may not be a big mistake: it is an idea of intertestamental Judaism and the individual writers who, by a constant process of revision and addition, produced the Old Testament.

Perhaps we can look forward after a few years to a revised and enlarged edition of this substantial and valuable work.

Out of the desert

By James Kirkup

PETRU DUMITRIU:

Au Dieu Inconnu
219pp. Paris: Seuil.

Theology in Britain is something of a closed shop, like religion: the professionals do not look kindly upon amateur outsiders, and for the most part view with horror the ordinary layman's ventures into mysticism and revelation. Theologians in particular are stern guardians of their own views of faith and dogma, and are often the most daunting and inhuman of religious interpreters - we have no Hans Küng, who was persecuted for the breadth and humanity of his views.

Perhaps this is why there are so few books published in Britain giving a personal insight into religious experience. Such works are common on the Continent, particularly in France, Switzerland and Germany. These books very often take the form of novels, autobiographies, plays, poetry and essay-diaries somewhat similar to the Japanese *zuihitsu* form - an attempt to combine minute observation of daily life, contemplative prose and poetry and philosophical self-examinations, often in the form of aphorisms. Examples of this kind of undogmatic mystical speculation in refined, sensitive literary style have been produced by writers as different as Charles Cery, *Le Dragueur de Dieu*, Conrad Detrez (*Le Dieu de l'Herbe à bruler*), Robert Escarpit (*Le Dieu de l'Herbe à bruler*), Paul Evdokimov (*L'Amour et le Dieu*), almost all the works of Elias Canetti, and the very remarkable *oeuvre* of the Austrian Thomas Bernhard.

The Romanian dissident Petru Dumitriu, now living in exile in "free" Europe, is another such writer. He was born in 1924 in the small Danubian village of Bazias, and started writing essays, in French, at the age of thirteen. During the Second World War, he was studying philosophy in Germany. On his return to Romania, he became part of the movement of Socialist Realism and his writings received many awards of merit. He became a reporter, edited a review, and was head of a state publishing house, though he was a communist without party card. Disillusioned by the Iron Curtain régime (a disillusionment well described in this book), he fled to the West, where he has lived since 1960, writing again in French; his 1962 novel, *Incognito*, is outstanding.

Then, around 1969, under the pressures and depressions of exile and an alien culture, he stopped writing. *Au Dieu Inconnu* is the result of more than ten years of silence, during which he has meditated deeply upon the nature of God, and on the possibility of belief in God. The style, written in a vigorous, slaphappy, rich with philosophical allusions and illuminating quotations from his vast reading, all presented with an easy scholarship, fills five chapters on the nature of evil are among the finest I have ever read on this intractable theme.

It was his questioning of the existence of God, and his exploration of personal solitude of soul and spirit that first attracted me to Dumitriu; as one who, like so many others, had experienced the desolation of encountering total silence when trying to enter into conversation with God. The tragic words of Christ upon the cross - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" - are a constant theme in this book. But it was the vivid autobiographical scenes from the author's childhood on a farm beside the Danube that moved me most, and drew me effortlessly into even his most recalcitrant contemplations. I was reminded so often of my own childhood experiences of good and evil, of loneliness, friendlessness, poverty and desperation in the face of a hostile world.

Future present

By J. L. Houlden

ANDREW T. LINCOLN:

Paradise Now and Not Yet
Studies in the role of the heavenly dimension in Paul's thought with special reference to his eschatology.
277pp. Cambridge University Press.
£15.
0 521 22944 8

The eschatological framework of New Testament thought, inherited from contemporary Judaism, has long been a major concern of biblical scholarship and likewise a problem for would-be interpreters of the thought of the Bible into a modern idiom. Attention has tended to concentrate on the temporal aspects of eschatology, so that it is salutary to be reminded of the strong spiritual ingredient in the apocalyptic thought

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Realization of the omnipresence of evil, and the ache of solitude and silence, came to Dumitriu at an early age. He had a violent, militant father, an ineffective mother. Life on a farm soon taught him man's inhumanity to man, and, even more, man's cruelty to his fellow-creatures, the beasts of the field. As he grew older, he tried to harden his heart, to be completely armoured against the horror of human existence in a totalitarian society more cruel than any farm or abattoir. He ruthlessly made his way to the top in a supposedly "socialist" and egalitarian world that was in fact opportunistic and bourgeois, anti-religion and anti-emotion.

How he broke away from that stultifying spiritual desert and found his way back to the West, to God, and to a "freedom" that he discovered was after all only relative, even in France, is the great theme of this work. We are not spared the humiliations, the disillusionments and the bitterness that were his lot at the hands of supposedly "free" men in the West. But he is rescued from self-destruction through the concern and guidance of a French priest whose great intellectual and human qualities make him, for Dumitriu, the ideal spiritual friend and teacher many of us long for, and never find.

Dumitriu addresses himself to many of the nightmare problems of our modern world, relates them to his own spiritual struggles, and gives us no easy solutions to our nuclear dilemma. But his whole book is one that shines with the curiously happy radiance of a mind exercising itself freely, with the grace and the mastery of a superb athlete of the emotions. Its final message is one of joy, hope and faith. It left me remembering the words of another great spiritual dissident, Solzhenitsyn: "Prayers are like those appeals of ours. Either they don't get through or they're returned with 'rejected' scrawled across them."

direct and close relation to heaven where he reigns in triumph, by virtue of their life "in him". Nevertheless, this is not for Paul an other-worldly doctrine. Rather, it is full of implications for the moral life in this world, including its social structures, as Colossians 3 indicates. Paul gives some comfort to those at the present day, who, abandoning traditional ideas and images, view faith in terms of a sense of transcendence within a purely earthly existence.

This well-organized book breaks little fresh ground, as its author admits, but it is a useful realignment of the evidence. Through a detailed consideration of the relevant passages, it demonstrates a uniformity of outlook on eschatology in all the Pauline letters, including the disputed Colossians and Ephesians. The variations in Paul's teaching, result from his need to respond to the different challenges posed by those whom he writes.

Drinking mystically, travelling sentimentally

By Geoffrey Hosking

BENEDICT EROFEEV:

Moscow Circles
Translated by J. R. Dorrell
188pp. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. £6.95.
0 906495 26 1

Some time in the early 1970s a mysterious, ill-typed *sanizdat* text circulated in Moscow, recounting the drunken and abortive attempts of one Benny Erofeev to complete a simple two-hour train journey from Moscow's Kursk Station to the suburban town of Petushki. In its outward form it resembled Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, the famous late eighteenth-century tract which castigated the abuses of autocracy and serfdom by recounting the stages of a journey between Russia's two principal cities. To all appearances, however, this form had been chosen only for the sake of parody: Radishchev's sober seriousness, and the documentary meticulousness of his recording of social conditions, were replaced in Erofeev by drunken meanderings, snatches of incoherent conversation, story-telling, dreams and internal monologue. There was a good deal of effective satire and word-play, but it did not seem to add up to very much. Naturally, no Soviet publisher would look at it. What is more interesting is that no émigré publisher would either. Erofeev's mock-sentimental journey appeared only in an obscure Russian-language journal in Israel - which then promptly ceased publication.

First of all, drink reassures man's spiritual freedom against the tyranny of matter and of planning in Soviet society. (The English language provides an unexpected bonus here, in that the word "spirit" also has an alcoholic ring in addition to its basic meaning.) By means of drink, the repressive fictions of Soviet life are given a liberating meaning. When Benny becomes a foreman of the cable-layers at Sheremetev Airport, he re-enacts Soviet

labour discipline in a new form, drawing up a "drinking plan", with its own time-table of "socialist obligations". What the tea-break is to Longbridge, the "vodka break" is to Sheremetev: the same informal fraternization, in time which is stolen from the bosses, gradually extended till it takes over the whole working day. "Oh, what freedom and equality! What fraternity and free-loading! Free of shame and idle care, we lived a life that was purely spiritual."

Similarly, in the trains, lonely travellers make each other's acquaintance by sharing their bottles or trying to steal them from one another. Company and culture are brought into drab lives. The passengers hold forth on Goethe and Turgenyev, Gogol and Sartre, Indira Gandhi and Moshe Dayan, indeed, in their inebriated bonhomie seem to regard them as intimate associates. Even the ticket collector gives up trying to collect fines, and instead demands one gram of vodka per kilometre from those travelling without a ticket, thus "strengthening his links with the masses".

So drink takes over the functions of labour discipline, socialist planning, social cohesion, fraternity, equality, and everything else that holds men together in society. There is an element of inverted Socialist Realism in all this, as well as of inverted Radishchev. Benny's journey burlesques the quest of the positive hero, with his sure sense of direction, his confidence in the future, his iron self-control. "One must live one's life in such a way as not to get one's cocktail recipes muddled", Benny proclaims, parodying the final reflections of Pavel Korchagin, one

of the most admired Stalinist heroes of the 1930s. But if drink sustains and inspires Benny, it is also his ruin. Surveying the motley collection of bottles with which he departs from Moscow, he exclaims: "Lord, you see before you the sum of my possessions. But is this what I need? Is this the object of my soul's desire?" To which the Lord replies: "Do you think St Theresa needed her stigmata?" Drink is the sign of Benny's martyrdom. Because of it he sleeps through Petushki (so at least we presume), and gets carried back in the darkness to Moscow. Here, stumbling around, half hoping he is really in Petushki, he fetches up against the walls of the Kremlin, citadel of the real equality and fraternity of Soviet society. Significantly, though he has been through Moscow many times in his journeyings, Benny has never before actually seen the Kremlin: it exists, as it were, on a different plane of reality from that which he has always inhabited. And there, under its walls, he is attacked by his four previous room-mates, envious philis-

ophers who had resented his flights of fantasy, his personal reticence, his sense of being a bit different. (The identity of his four assailants is not made absolutely clear, and the translator believes that they are the "great quartet", Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, whose continuing power is exercised from inside those walls; though his theory would transmute Benny's death into the realm of pure fantasy, which I think unwarranted.)

Using drink as a tool of sociological observation, as a satirical device, a means of liberation and an instrument of tragedy, Erofeev has written one of the most remarkable of recent Russian novels, a memorable distillation of *la condition humaine* in a totalitarian society. Would that we knew more about its author. From the publisher's account, he is a personality very like Benny, an intellectual expelled from university for his unorthodox ideas, and living from casual jobs on construction sites. One wonders whether we shall hear more from him; or whether he has shared Benny's fate.

A two-headed *Québécois*, Charles and François Papineau, write(s) his/their thoughts and recall(s) his/their past while he/they await(s) the operation which will cut each of the two heads in half, and by joining a right half to a left half produce a normal Canadian. The normal Canadian turns out, of course, to be English-speaking (since the French language was unfortunately in the discarded left half), and this French-language novel ends with a brief letter in graceful English by the newly unified Charles F. Papineau, who has gone to work in computers at Vancouver.

The symbolism is obvious: this is another stage in Jacques Godbout's exploration - one shared by many of his compatriots - of what it is to be "celui qui parle français en Amérique". The French Canadian is an oddity, a frog (frog prince perhaps), because "in the Anglophone ocean everything that does not saxon ('tout ce qui ne saxonne') is a boctracien". He is a monster, divided against himself, a bicephalous, bicultural, bilingual monster. And as such he is naturally richer than the monoglot English Canadians who are the villains of the piece with their computers and their modern surgery.

It is an old theme adapted to a difficult modern situation. The outlook here seems more desperate than in most of Godbout's earlier work, but as before the manner is largely humorous. The blurb promises "un livre cocasse et tendre, où l'on retrouve l'ironie ravageuse de l'auteur de *Salut Galarneau*". It is true that there is a fair amount of word-play and that the subject itself is fertile in bizarre episodes, but compared with the earlier work, it all comes across rather half-heartedly. It is as if the author had deliberately opted for an inconsequential manner, perhaps to set off the monstrosity of the matter, but *Les têtes à Papineau* is no *Métemorphosis*. It reads easily; the story is unusual enough in all conscience; but the book does not stick in the mind.

The Referee

After Europe, all winter the days rushed through me as if I were dead, the brown sea pouring into the cities at night, the rain-smell of fish,

and when you ask for my story, how we came to be blown along your dock-streets, pocked and scuffed, in rags, I remember only the last hot light at the railside.

How to make you imagine our square and streets, the glass like falls of water, the gold-leaf in the opera houses, there were summer birds golden as weeds,

the scent of coffee and halva rising from marble tables, and on dark afternoons the trains grinding on wet rails round the corners of plaster palaces,

such a babble of Empire now extinguished, we can never go home, Dido, only ghosts remain to know that we exist.

Elaine Feinstein

Better than one

By Peter France

JACQUES GODBOIT:

Les têtes à Papineau
156pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 00625 6

Two-headed *Québécois*, Charles and François Papineau, write(s) his/their thoughts and recall(s) his/their past while he/they await(s) the operation which will cut each of the two heads in half, and by joining a right half to a left half produce a normal Canadian. The normal Canadian turns out, of course, to be English-speaking (since the French language was unfortunately in the discarded left half), and this French-language novel ends with a brief letter in graceful English by the newly unified Charles F. Papineau, who has gone to work in computers at Vancouver.

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Boys' own Fascism

By John Gatt-Rutter

TULLIO KEZICH:

Il campeggio di Dottoglian
72pp. Studio Tesi. L4,500.

What was it like to grow up under Fascism? Tullio Kezich's autobiographical fiction gives us the experience of Fascism as perceived by a naive child, but scrupulously reconstructed from adult memory. He registers the intimate relationship between political ideology and a young boy's psychology in this account of one day and night in the life of an eleven-year-old Trieste boy in the summer of 1939 - the first day and night he has spent away from his family at a Fascist youth camp on the Slav-populated Carso plateau above Trieste. The young Paolo Rancovich looks forward to the camp as an initiation to the values

which Fascism appears to promise - manhood, adventure, personal prestige. It turns out to be a petty and squalid affair: pseudo-military discipline, bullying by the older boys and equally mindless puerile antics by the younger ones.

Paolo is no better than the rest, and Kezich mercilessly lays bare his petulance and inability to confront any situation; Paolo prefers to sham sleep by sickness and to indulge in shame-faced fantasies, variously of mawkish or vengeful. This is the Fascist ideology as internalized by an eleven-year-old, alternately loud-mouthed and wheedling. Kezich renders it with a sober resourcefulness of style, ranging from intricate sub-visions of subordinate clauses to the effusive flow of interior monologue and the egregious barrack-room colloquialisms. Fascist oppression of the local Slav population adds a special Trieste flavour. Rancovich, with the above Trieste, the young Paolo Rancovich looks forward to the camp as an initiation to the values

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